



## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MEETING OF THE CABINET**

**WEDNESDAY 31ST MARCH 2021**

**AT 6.00 P.M.**

### **MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**MEMBERS:** Councillors K.J. May (Leader), A. D. Kent (Deputy Leader), G. N. Denaro, M. A. Sherrey, P.L. Thomas and S. A. Webb

### **AGENDA**

1. **To receive apologies for absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest**

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.
3. **To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 17th February and 24th February 2021 (Pages 1 - 14)**
4. **Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 15th February 2021 (Pages 15 - 22)**
  - (a) To receive and note the minutes
  - (b) To consider any recommendations contained within the minutes
5. **Equalities Task Group (Pages 23 - 52)**
6. **Green Homes Funding (Pages 53 - 58)**

This report is due to be pre-scrutinised at a meeting of of the Overview and Scrutiny Board scheduled to take place on Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Any recommendations on this subject arising from that meeting will be reported for Cabinet's consideration in a supplementary pack.

7. **Finance Monitoring 2021/22 - Quarter 3 Report (Pages 59 - 80)**
8. **Community Grants Scheme (Pages 81 - 88)**
9. **To consider any urgent business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting**

K. DICKS  
Chief Executive

Parkside  
Market Street  
BROMSGROVE  
Worcestershire  
B61 8DA

23rd March 2021

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If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact  
Jess Bayley

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## **GUIDANCE ON VIRTUAL MEETINGS**

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Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic Bromsgrove District Council will be holding this meeting in accordance with the relevant legislative arrangements for remote meetings of a local authority. For more information please refer to the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police Crime Panels meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Please note that this is a public meeting conducted remotely on Microsoft Teams software between invited participants and live streamed for general access via the Council's YouTube channel.

You are able to access the livestream of the meeting from the Committee Pages of the website, alongside the agenda for the meeting.

If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.

### **Notes:**

As referred to above, the virtual Microsoft Teams meeting will be streamed live and accessible to view. Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when Council might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded and for any such items the live stream will be suspended and that part of the meeting will not be recorded.

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## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MEETING OF THE CABINET**

**17TH FEBRUARY 2021, AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), A. D. Kent (Deputy Leader), G. N. Denaro, M. A. Sherrey, P.L. Thomas and S. A. Webb

Observers: Councillor S. R. Colella, Councillor A. B. L. English, Councillor C. A. Hotham and Councillor K. J. Van Der Plank

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mrs. S. Hanley, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr C. Forrester and Ms. J. Bayley

61/20 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

62/20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Shirley Webb declared an other disclosable interest in Minute Item no. 66/20 – Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan – due to her role as the ward Councillor for Catshill South. She remained in the meeting during the debate on the item and took part in the vote.

63/20 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 13TH JANUARY 2021**

The Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 be approved as a true and correct record.

64/20 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 11TH JANUARY 2021**

Cabinet was advised that there were no recommendations from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 for consideration.

Members were also advised that there were no recommendations arising from the meeting of the Board held on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021 requiring consideration at this time, though proposals would be considered at a future meeting.

During consideration of this item, Members welcomed Councillor C. Hotham, who had been appointed as the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board at the meeting of the Board held on 15<sup>th</sup> February. Cabinet regularly considered proposals received from the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Councillor Hotham was advised that he would be welcome to attend future meetings of Cabinet to speak on behalf of the Board.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 be noted.

65/20

## **MOTION ON NOTICE - REFERRED TO CABINET**

### **Motion on Notice – Bromsgrove Tree for Life Scheme – Councillor S. Colella**

Councillor S. Colella presented a Motion on the subject of introducing a Bromsgrove Tree for Life Scheme in the district, which had been referred to Cabinet by Council. This Motion had been submitted to Council in September 2020 and Councillor Colella commented that he was keen to receive an update on progress.

A response was provided to this Motion by the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services. Cabinet was informed that there was support for planting new trees in the district. However, this could not be funded using the £25,000 budget available for the use of the Council's Place Team, as that funding had already been allocated. Unfortunately, there was no other suitable budget available for this purpose. Therefore, Officers had been asked to investigate the potential to access external sources of grant funding. In addition, Members were advised that Worcestershire County Council had a programme of planting which could assist with this matter, though the programme could not be controlled by Bromsgrove District Council.

Cabinet was advised that additional information had been identified in relation to the National Tree Planting Scheme. Officers had been tasked with exploring the potential for Bromsgrove District to benefit from this scheme. Moving forward, the Council needed to work with partner organisations, including Worcestershire County Council, to address this matter.

66/20

## **CATSHILL AND NORTH MARLBROOK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services began by thanking Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council for their hard work in preparing the Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan. Cabinet was informed that a lot of work had been undertaken in the preparation of the plan by both the Parish Council and the Council's Planning Department. There had been hopes that the referendum in respect of the plan could take place on the date of the County Council

elections, in May 2021. However, unfortunately it was unlikely that these timeframes would be met.

The Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager presented the report and in so doing explained that Council Officers had provided advice to Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council on the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. The plan detailed policies pertaining to the parish of Catshill and North Marlbrook. The plan was forward thinking and referenced Bromsgrove District Council's Local Plan. Within the document, sites had been identified which could be suitable for future development and information had been provided about potential housing numbers at developments in the parish. The policies within the plan would help to inform future consideration of planning applications that were submitted for sites within the parish.

The Council's response to the neighbourhood plan had been provided for Members' consideration. Council responses to neighbourhood plans were issued at a time considered to be appropriate by the Council. Subject to Member approval, the neighbourhood plan would subsequently be the subject of public consultation and the public would be able to access the documentation in the plan on both Bromsgrove District Council's website and on Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council's website. Once the consultation process was complete, the neighbourhood plan would be considered at a public enquiry. At the end of that enquiry process there would be a local referendum. Unfortunately, it was not possible to gauge how long the examination process would take and for that reason it was not possible to guarantee that the referendum could take place at the same time as the County Council elections in May 2021.

**RESOLVED** that

- 1) The letter at Appendix 2 is sent to Catshill & North Marlbrook Parish Council as the District Council's response to the CNMNP submission version;
- 2) A six-week statutory ('Regulation 16') representation period on the Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan is held by the District Council;
- 3) Delegated authority is given to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services to appoint an independent examiner to undertake examination of the Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan following the statutory representation period; and
- 4) delegated authority is given to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services to arrange a referendum on the Catshill and North Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the recommendations set out in the examiner's report.

67/20

## **FINAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling explained that the Council Tax Support Scheme had been pre-scrutinised at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Several queries had been raised during the debate on this item and Officers had undertaken some remodelling work in response. Further time was needed to complete this work and therefore it was proposed that this item should be deferred for consideration at the Cabinet meeting that was scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

68/20

## **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021/22 - 2024/25 INCLUDING CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

The Head of Financial and Customer Services presented the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24 and in so doing highlighted the following points for Members' consideration:

- The budget had been prepared at a difficult time, in the midst of a global pandemic and at a time of uncertainty for local government finances.
- District Councils could increase Council Tax by a maximum of 2.99 per cent or £5. Officers were proposing that Council Tax should be increased by £5 in Bromsgrove as this would result in a slightly higher rate of return to the Council.
- There had been a sizable gap in the budget for 2021/22 which had had to be addressed in balancing the budget.
- Additional pressures, including loss of income from car parking fees, had needed to be taken into account, though some of the losses in income from parking had been offset by the financial support provided by the Government.
- The Corporate Management Team (CMT) had reviewed the Council's budget on a line-by-line basis and had identified a number of savings and income opportunities in doing so.
- Many of the savings that had been reported were relatively small. However, cumulatively the savings contributed to balancing the budget for 2021/22.
- Funding had been received from the New Homes Bonus (NHB) for 2021/22. However, there was uncertainty about the availability of funding from this or a replacement scheme in future years.
- The proposed budget would result in a return of £22,000 to balances in 2021/22. However, there remained gaps in the budget in 2022/23 and 2023/24 which would need to be addressed moving forward.
- The Council would be using £638,000 from reserves to help balance the budget in 2021/22. This funding could not be reused in future years.



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- The Council's balances remained in excess of £1 million. The strength of the Council's balances compared favourably with other district Councils.
- A significant bid for capital funding had been included for Disabled Facilities Grants, though Members were asked to note that these were not funded by the Council.
- There was a large bid for capital funding for electric vehicle charging points, though Cabinet was advised that some of these costs could be met through grant funding.
- The Covid-19 pandemic had added to the uncertainty regarding local government finances. The continuing impact of the pandemic was difficult to predict.
- Brexit was also adding to uncertainty about the future financial position of the Council. There was the possibility that Brexit would impact on local businesses and subsequently on future business rate collections, though this remained to be clarified.

Following the presentation of the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling thanked the Financial Services team for their hard work. It was acknowledged that budget preparation had been particularly challenging during the Covid-19 pandemic and that this had occurred at a time when the Financial Service Team were also working hard to distribute grant funding to local businesses. However, Members commented that despite this, the Council was proposing a balanced budget.

Cabinet was informed that 2021/22 would be the first year in which the Council Tax base would decline, by £74,000. In part, this was due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, as fewer houses had been built during 2020/21 as a consequence. In addition, the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme would result in a lower rate of return to the Council, as extra support would be provided to the most vulnerable residents.

Members welcomed the proposed funding that would support the green thread in the Council Plan. This included the proposed capital funding for electric vehicle charging points and, as well as supporting the green agenda, Members commented that this would support initiatives to encourage people to return to the town centre once the pandemic had ended, to the benefit of local businesses. Cabinet also welcomed the proposed capital funding for the purchase of a new electric bus, which would help to connect Bromsgrove town centre to Bromsgrove Railway Station. Members commented that this would enable more people to access Bromsgrove town centre moving forward, which would help the local economy.

During consideration of this item, Members highlighted a typographical error in respect of the figures that had been provided for Council Tax. In the report it had been recorded that there would be demand on the collection fund to meet the Council's needs at £8.64 million but later in the report it had also been reported that in 2021/22 a total of £8.665

million was due to be collected. Officers agreed to check the accuracy of the figures provided prior to Council.

**RECOMMENDED** that

1) The Unavoidable costs be approved:

2021/22 £524k  
2022/23 £340k  
2023/24 £409k

2) The Revenue Bids be approved:

2021/22 £65k  
2022/23 £48k  
2023/24 £25k

3) The Identified Savings be approved:

2021/22 £426k  
2022/23 £474k  
2023/24 £405k

4) The General Fund Capital Programme bids be approved:

2021/22 £578k  
2022/23 £1.123m  
2023/24 £1.018m

5) The General Fund capital programme be approved:

2021/22 £13.323m  
2022/23 £4.867m  
2023/24 £2.906m

6) The net general fund revenue budget be approved.

2021/22 £11.988m  
2022/23 £11.673m  
2023/24 £11.683m

7) The increase of the Council Tax per Band D at £5 for 2021/22 be approved; and

8) The transfer to Balances of £22k for 2020/21 be approved.

69/20

## **PAY POLICY STATEMENT**

The Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 was considered by Cabinet. Members were advised that there was a statutory requirement for this report to be considered each year as part of the budget setting process.

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The report detailed the pay scales of staff employed by the Council, from the Chief Executive to the lowest paid staff. Staffing costs were shared with Redditch Borough Council due to the shared services arrangements that were in place with that local authority.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 be approved.

(Prior to the end of the meeting the Chairman thanked the Senior Democratic Services Officer for Bromsgrove, who was shortly due to leave the Council, for her hard work and support and wished her a long and happy retirement.)

The meeting closed at 6.33 p.m.

Chairman

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## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MEETING OF THE CABINET**

**24TH FEBRUARY 2021, AT 4.30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), A. D. Kent (Deputy Leader), G. N. Denaro, M. A. Sherrey, P.L. Thomas and S. A. Webb

Observers: Councillor A. B. L. English

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mrs. S. Hanley, Mrs. R. Bamford, Mr C. Forrester, Ms. C. Flanagan, Mr D Riley, Ms K. Goldey and Ms. J. Bayley

70/20 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

71/20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

72/20 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 17TH FEBRUARY 2021 (TO FOLLOW)**

The Chairman advised that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021 would be considered at the following meeting of Cabinet in March.

73/20 **ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE - THE VILLAGE INN, BEOLEY**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services presented a report which nominated The Village Inn, at Holt Hill, Beoley as an Asset of Community Value. Cabinet was informed that there had been a lot of preparatory work undertaken in respect of the nomination and this proposal was supported.

During consideration of this item Councillor A. English, as the ward Councillor for Beoley, spoke in support of the nomination of The Village Inn as an Asset of Community Value. Members were informed that by providing The Village Inn with the status of Asset of Community Value, the Parish Council would be able to make a bid for the building.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet support the listing of The Village Inn, Holt Hill, Beoley, B98 9AT as an Asset of Community Value

74/20

## **COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION (TO FOLLOW)**

The Head of Financial and Customer Services presented the Council Tax Resolutions 2021/22. Cabinet was advised that there had been a delay to the publication of this report as the Council had been waiting for information from all of the precepting authorities about their settlements. Assumptions had been incorporated into the Council Tax Resolutions in respect of the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority, as the authority had not yet held a meeting to determine their requirements. Therefore, a request had been made in the report for authority to be delegated to the Head of Financial and Customer Services to amend the resolutions should the Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority agree a settlement that differed from the assumptions in the report.

During consideration of this item, Members discussed the proposed increase in Council Tax for Bromsgrove District Council. Officers confirmed that District Councils could increase Council Tax by a maximum of either 1.99 per cent or by £5. Officers were proposing that Council Tax should increase by £5 in Bromsgrove, as this would result in a slightly higher rate of return to the authority.

**RESOLVED** to NOTE that at a meeting of Cabinet held on 13th January 2021 Members approved the calculated Council Tax Base 2021/22 as:

- (a) for the whole Council area as 37,186.55 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]; and
- (b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates the amounts as shown in Column 4 of the attached Schedule 1.

**RECOMMENDED** that

- 1) The calculation for the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2021/22 (excluding Parish precepts) as **£8,664,624.08**.
- 2) The following amounts be calculated for the year 2021/22 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
  - (a) £43,940,922 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act (taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils) (*i.e.*, *Gross expenditure*);
  - (b) £34,224,101 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act. (*i.e.*, *Gross income*);

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- (c) £9,716,821 being the amount by which the aggregate of 1.2.2(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 1.2.2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act);
  - (d) £261.30 being the amount at 1.2.2 (c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1.1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts);
  - (e) £1,052,198 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34 (1) of the Act (as per the attached **Schedule 3**);
  - (f) £233.00 being the amount at 1.2.2 (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 1.2.2 (e) above by Item T (1.1 (a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates;
  - (g) The amounts shown in Column 3 of **Schedule 1**. These are the basic amounts of the council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of the Council's area shown in Column 1 of the schedule respectively to which special items relate, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act. (District and Parish combined at Band D);
  - (h) The amounts shown in Column 5 of **Schedule 1** being the amount given by multiplying the amounts at 2.2.2(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands;
- 3) It be noted that for the year 2021/22, Worcestershire County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia and Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwelling in the Council's area as indicated below:

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	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Worcestershire County Council	895.89	1,045.20	1,194.52	<b>1,343.83</b>	1,642.46	1,941.09	2,239.72	2,687.66
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	160.13	186.81	213.50	<b>240.19</b>	293.57	346.94	400.32	480.38
Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority	58.45	68.20	77.94	<b>87.68</b>	107.16	126.65	146.13	175.36

- 4) That having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 1.2.2(h) and 1.2.3 above, that Bromsgrove District Council in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 hereby sets the amounts shown in Schedule 2 as the amounts of Council Tax for 2021/22. for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings;
- 5) The Executive Director Finance & Resources be authorised to make payments under Section 90(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the Collection Fund by ten equal instalments between April 2021 to March 2022 as detailed below:

	Precept £	Deficit on Collection Fund £	Total to pay £
Worcestershire County Council	49,972,401.00	<b>-183,950.00</b>	49,788,451.00
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	8,931,837.44	<b>-31,596.78</b>	8,900,240.66
Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority	3,260,346.04	<b>-12,065.05</b>	3,248,280.99

- 6) The Executive Director Finance & Resources be authorised to make transfers under Section 97 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the Collection Fund to the General Fund the sum of £9,681,240 being the Council's own demand on the Collection Fund (£8,664,623.06) and Parish Precepts (£1,052,197) and the distribution of the Deficit on the Collection Fund (£35,580);
- 7) The Executive Director Finance & Resources be authorised to make payments from the General Fund to Parish Councils the sums listed on **Schedule 3** by two equal instalment on 1 April 2021 and 1 October 2021 in respect of the precept levied on the Council;
- 8) The above resolutions to be signed by the Chief Executive for use in legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the recovery of unpaid Council Taxes;



- 9) Notices of the making of the said Council Taxes signed by the Chief Executive are given by advertisement in the local press under Section 38(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992; and
- 10) That authority be delegated to the Head of Finance and Customer Services (Interim S151) following consultation with the finance portfolio holder to amend the resolution should the Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority Service not approve the estimated figure that is being used in this report. This is due to the Hereford and Worcester Authority Service having their approval meeting after this resolution report has been brought to Council.

75/20

**TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROPERTY SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING**

### **Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22**

Cabinet considered the Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22 as urgent business, having deferred the item at a meeting held on Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

The Financial Support Manager presented the Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22 report and in so doing highlighted the following points for Members' consideration:

- The Council Tax Support Scheme was reviewed on an annual basis.
- The amended scheme had been considered by Cabinet in draft form earlier in the municipal year and had subsequently been subject to public consultation.
- The majority of people who had responded in the consultation process had been broadly supportive of the proposed changes.
- The new Council Tax Support Scheme would be an income banded scheme.
- Where residents were in particular need, there would be the option for them to receive 100 per cent relief in relation to Council Tax. This compared favourably with the existing scheme, whereby everybody, regardless of income, had to make a Council Tax contribution.
- The support available to residents was tapered and took into account residents' income.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Board had pre-scrutinised the scheme at a meeting held on Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021, where a number of issues had been raised.
- In response to the points raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting, Officers had undertaken remodelling work.

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- Through that remodelling work, Officers had identified that 82 per cent of people who received support through the scheme would receive an increase in support, 3 per cent would remain unaffected and 15 per cent would experience a reduction in support.
- Additional assistance would be available for the 15 per cent of people who would experience a reduction in support, through the Hardship Scheme.
- The proposed changes would result in an increase in costs to the Council of £136,000. However, this was less than the costs to the authority in 2014/15 when Council Tax Support Schemes were first localised.
- People in receipt of Universal Credit would be eligible for support under the scheme. The Council would be notified by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) about new Universal Credit applicants, which would make the scheme simpler for the customer.
- The new scheme would require less administration by the Council and would be less bureaucratic for residents.
- The new scheme would also make it easier for residents to plan their expenses and manage their household budgets.
- Housing benefit payments would no longer be taken into account under the new scheme.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the number of people who would be impacted by the changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme. Officers confirmed that only 375 applicants out of a total 2,709 would be negatively impacted and they would be eligible to apply for support under the Hardship Scheme. Further information had been provided in a breakdown of the different client groups, based on averages, to help demonstrate the potential consequences for different households.

Reference was made to the Hardship Scheme and Members questioned how this was accessed and advertised to the public. Officers advised that the Hardship Scheme was promoted on the Council's website. Staff working in the Council Tax department would also promote the scheme to eligible residents where it was identified that people were struggling to make payments.

**RECOMMENDED** the introduction of a new income banded / grid scheme for working age applicants with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to implement a modern, future proofed scheme and reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit.

The meeting closed at 4.50 p.m.

Chairman

## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

**15TH FEBRUARY 2021, AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors J. Till (Vice-Chairman), C.A. Hotham, R. J. Hunter, A. D. Kriss, P. M. McDonald, C. J. Spencer, M. Thompson and P. Whittaker

Observers: Councillor K. May – Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Town Centre and Strategic Partnerships

Councillor G. N. Denaro – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mrs. S. Hanley, Mrs. R. Bamford, Mr. C. Forrester, Mrs J. Willis Mr. G. Revans, Mr. D. Riley, Mr. M. Austin, and Ms K. Goldey

Democratic Services Officers: Ms. A Scarce and Mrs. J Gresham

70/20

### **ELECTION OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD CHAIRMAN**

Nominations for the position of Chairman were received in respect of Councillor C. Hotham. On being put to the vote a majority of Members on the Board agreed that Councillor Hotham should be appointed Chairman.

**RESOLVED** that Councillor C. Hotham be appointed as Chairman of the Board for the remainder of the municipal year.

71/20

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R. Deeming with Councillor P. Whittaker as named substitute.

72/20

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no declarations of interest nor of any whipping arrangements.

73/20

**TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 11TH JANUARY 2021**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 were submitted for Members' consideration.

The Chairman enquired whether it was possible for Councillor R. Hunter to have a dispensation considered in respect of the declaration of the pecuniary interest regarding his employment with a not-for-profit-housing association. Officers undertook to look into this and provide an update at a future meeting.

It was noted that there was a duplication of the subtitle Notice of Motion - Encouraging responsible use of fireworks at item 64/20 Notice of Motions - Request to Investigate. The Democratic Services Officer present undertook to make the correction.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

74/20

**MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021/22 TO 2024/25 (INCLUDING THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME) - PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Head of Financial and Customer Services presented the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24 and in so doing highlighted the following points for Members' consideration:

- District Councils could increase Council Tax by a maximum of 2.99 per cent or £5. Officers were proposing that Council Tax should be increased by £5 in Bromsgrove. This would help the Council to have a robust financial position going forward.
- There was a sizeable gap in the budget which was considered a difficult position to start from and had been compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic and uncertainty in respect of grant funding from Central Government.
- There was pressure on the incremental progression which was driven by the increase in pay award at 2.75% instead of the expected 1%.
- Additional pressures, including loss of income from car parking fees, though some of these losses in income from parking had been offset by the financial support provided by Central Government.

# Agenda Item 4

Overview and Scrutiny Board  
15th February 2021

- There was a correction to the Business Case in respect of Commercial Waste which had been a result of an increase in costs charged by Severn Trent Water.
- New Revenue bids had been received which were mainly concerned with provision of IT Member Support and Training.
- The Corporate Management Team (CMT) and budget managers had reviewed the Council's budget and in doing so had identified a number of savings and income opportunities. The cumulative amount of these identified significant savings of £426k.
- A significant grant had been received from the Lower Tiers Services Grant which had not been expected.
- The proposed budget would result in a return of £22,000 to reserves in 2021/22. However, significant gaps remained in 2022/23 and 2023/24. This would result in a substantial amount of work being done in order to address these gaps for future years.
- New Homes Bonus was likely to no longer be available by 2023-4.
- There had been significant capital funding bids for Disabled Facilities Grants in addition to the 'Green Thread' bids. However, it was clarified that some of the funding in respect of the electric vehicle charge points was to be funded by using grant funding that had been received.
- Covid-19 and Brexit had impacted on the future financial position of the Council. However, both had been placed on the Risk Register and officers were working on mitigating any risks associated with these.

Following the presentation of the report the Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling to comment, and he explained that it had been a significant piece of work to prepare the budget in such difficult circumstances however, despite this, a balanced budget was still being proposed. He thanked the Head of Finance and Customer Services and his team for their hard work.

Following the presentation, the Board discussed the proposed deferral of the recruitment of two Environmental Services Officer roles which had been presented as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan. After detailed debate regarding the proposed deferral the following recommendation was proposed by Councillor R. Hunter:

***That the two the Environmental Services Officers roles, as outlined in the Medium-Term Finance Plan, be reinstated and not deferred as proposed within the Plan.***

# Agenda Item 4

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On being put to the vote this recommendation was lost.

Members questioned officers in respect of the potential loss of parking revenue in the Town Centre for future years. The Head of Finance and Customer Services reported that it was expected that there would be a decrease in car parking revenue in the first quarter and therefore this had been reflected the core budget.

In response to Members' questions regarding the Correction to the Disposal Budget on Commercial Waste. It was clarified by the Head of Environmental Services and Housing Property Services that the increase in costs for the disposal of waste were due to the increase in the amount of waste that was being collected in addition to the cost increases charged by Severn Trent Water for the disposal of waste. Members were informed that during the pandemic the Commercial Waste service figures had been slightly distorted but that new customers were still signing up for the service and which would result in a continued increase in income.

During the consideration of this item further clarification was requested in respect of the following:

- Mileage and professional services. Members were informed that the savings in respect of mileage appeared several times within the Plan across various Service Areas and that mileage claims were still being made.
- Fleet Replacement. It was clarified that work had been undertaken in respect of the replacement of the fleet with electric or hybrid vehicles. It was reported that vehicles with these fuel types were considerably more expensive than the current vehicles and further work would be undertaken, and any findings reported back to Members later in 2021.
- Covid-19 Business Grants. Members were informed that the discretionary grants had been reflected within the Plan in addition to the grants received in respect of fees and charges. The process was explained in detail regarding how the grants would be allocated in the future.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

75/20

**COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME**

# Agenda Item 4

Overview and Scrutiny Board  
15th February 2021

The Financial Support Manager presented the Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22 report and in so doing highlighted the following points for Members' consideration:

- The Council Tax Support Scheme was reviewed on an annual basis.
- The amended scheme had been considered by Cabinet in draft form earlier in the municipal year and had subsequently been subject to public consultation in October 2020. The majority of those who had responded through the consultation process were broadly in support of the proposed scheme.
- The proposed changes would result in an increase in costs to the Council of approximately £136,000.
- The new banded scheme worked in a more integrated way with Universal Credit and make the process simpler for the customer.
- There would be an increase in the level of support to the most vulnerable residents.
- The hardship provisions from the previous were to be retained and residents whose eligibility had been reduced under the new scheme would be able to apply for these provisions.

The Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling to comment on the report. He reiterated the hardship provision included within the proposed new scheme and highlighted that those who were most in need would still receive support going forward. It was confirmed that the hardship provision information was available on the Council's website and it was possible to apply for funding online and claims were dealt with by a specialist team that dealt with applications.

Following presentation of the report Members raised some concerns in respect of the data provided regarding the number of residents that might be adversely impacted by the proposed scheme. Officers were questioned whether any modelling had been conducted to understand the potential impact on residents in the District, particularly those who were to experience a decrease in the amount of Council Tax reduction they received. In addition to this, it was queried what the rationale was regarding the reduced level of support for the single person and childless couple client group which was included within the report. Officers confirmed that any Council Tax scheme was required to incentivise a return to work and the paragraph included within the report was not a comment on any particular client group.

Some Members commented that although they understood the reservations expressed by some Members that it was positive that

hardship provision was still available for those who were potentially affected by the new scheme. However, it was requested that the scheme be revisited in the next financial year to see if it was operating as expected. It was clarified that this scheme was revised or replaced on an annual basis.

After lengthy debate, Councillor R. Hunter proposed the following:

***The decrease in Council Tax support for the 28% of residents, as detailed in the report, be quantified and presented to Cabinet before their consideration of the Council Tax Support Scheme report.***

On being put to the vote this recommendation was lost.

Councillor P. McDonald presented an amendment to the Board in respect of the removal of the paragraph within the report regarding reduction in the amount of Council Tax support for those in the single person or childless couple client group. However, this recommendation was withdrawn and not put to the vote.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

76/20

## **EQUALITIES TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT**

Councillor P. McDonald introduced the Equalities Task Group Final Report for Members' consideration and highlighted the following:

- There had been regular attendance at the Task Group meetings which had resulted in a consistent approach during meetings and enabled the investigation to be completed in good time.
- The recommendations of the Task Group would hopefully enhance the Equalities policies that were already in place within Council operations.

The Chairman reiterated Councillor McDonald's point regarding the importance of consistency for Task Groups and that this should be a consideration when undertaking future task group investigations.

**RECOMMENDED** that the report and recommendations as detailed in it be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

77/20

## **FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE**



The Chairman introduced the Finance and Budget Working Group update and explained that the Working Group had met on 11th February 2021 and had looked at a number of areas in detail.

Members were informed that the Medium-Term Financial Plan had been considered in addition to the additional costs that were associated with Commercial Waste. He explained that due to the increase in septic tank disposal costs from Severn Trent Water the revenue from the Commercial Waster Service would be impacted. He clarified that officers were consulting with Severn Trent Water to see if there were any potential solutions to the increase in charges.

Also highlighted for Member's attention that work was being undertaken regarding the type of lifting mechanism currently used in the bin lorry vehicles. It was explained that there had been some issues regarding the lifting of bins with the current type of mechanisms and that there might need to be a gradual, replacement bin programme in the future. Members queried whether there was the potential to use a hybrid version and the Democratic Services officer present undertook to ask the relevant officers and provide the information to the Committee.

**RESOLVED** that the Finance and Budget Working Group update be noted.

78/20

## **TASK GROUP UPDATES**

- a) Impact of Review of Library Services Task Group – Chairman, Councillor S. Colella

Councillor S. Colella presented this update and informed Members that the final meeting had taken place for the Task group and a report had been drafted and would be presented at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting that was due to take place in March 2021.

- b) Impact of Flooding in the District Task Group – Chairman, Councillor R. Hunter

Councillor R. Hunter updated the Board regarding the Task Group and informed Members that the final meeting was due to take place during the following week. He informed Members that he please with the recommendations that had been proposed as a result of the investigation. The report would be presented to the Board at the meeting due to take place in March 2021.

**RESOLVED** that the verbal updates in respect of the Task Groups be noted.

79/20

## **WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE**

Councillor J. Till presented the update from the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and advised Members that there had been one meeting since the last Board meeting. Members were informed that Peter Pinfield, the Chairman of Healthwatch Worcestershire, had sadly passed away in January 2021.

During the meeting updates on Covid-19 and the vaccination programme had been provided and Councillor Till highlighted that the data fluctuated regularly. It was confirmed that any information received would continue to be circulated to Members as and when it was received.

**RESOLVED** that the verbal update in respect of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

80/20

## **CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

The Cabinet Work programme dated 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021 was considered by the Board.

**RESOLVED** that the Cabinet Work Programme be noted and that the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Work Programme for 2020-21, be updated to include any items that had been discussed and agreed during the course of the meeting.

81/20

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

This item was discussed as part of the previous item.

The meeting closed at 7.49 p.m.

Chairman

**Cabinet**  
2021

31<sup>st</sup> March

**Equalities Task Group Final Report**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor G Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No
Relevant Head of Service	Head of Transformation, Organisational Development & Digital Strategy
Report Author	Senior Democratic Services Officer <a href="mailto:a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk">a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk</a> Contact Tel: 01527 881443
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	An Effective and Sustainable Council
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that:-

- (a) the report and the recommendations attached at Appendix 1 be approved;

**2. BACKGROUND**

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 Any financial implications are detailed within the main body of the report.

**4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Any legal implications are detailed within the main body of the report.

**5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**

**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 This report would come under An Effective and Sustainable Council, which relates to all things corporate.

**Cabinet**  
2021

31<sup>st</sup> March

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**Climate Change Implications**

5.2 There are no Climate Change Implications arising from this report.

**6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

6.1 The Policy Team have been involved in the Task Group and are aware of the recommendations arising from the final report.

**Operational Implications**

6.2 There would be some resource implications arising from approval of the recommendations which have been highlighted to the relevant Head of Service.

**7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

7.1 Overview and scrutiny is a key part of the Council's democratic decision making process and enables non-executive Members of the Council to put forward recommendations for policy development, policy review and service improvement.

**8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Appendix 1 – Equalities Task Group Report

(Background papers are listed within the main report.)

**Cabinet**  
2021

31<sup>st</sup> March

**9. REPORT SIGN OFF**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name and Job Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling is aware of the report.	February 2021
Lead Director / Head of Service	Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy	January 2021
Financial Services	No direct financial implications	
Legal Services	Rachel Martin – Team Leader, Contracts & Commercial	January 2021
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Rebecca Green – Policy Manager	January 2021
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	N/A	

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**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY  
BOARD**

**EQUALITIES TASK  
GROUP**

**FINAL REPORT**

**January 2021**



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council

[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

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## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP**



**Councillor Peter McDonald (Chairman)**



Councillor Andrew Beaumont



Councillor Malcolm Glass



Councillor Helen Jones



Councillor Adrian Kriss



Councillor Harrison Rone-Clarke



Councillor Caroline Spencer



Councillor Jo-Anne Till

## **SUPPORTING OFFICER DETAILS**

Amanda Scarce – Senior Democratic Services Officer  
[a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)

## **Foreword from the Chairman**

The aims of the Equalities Task Group were to ensure that every employee has access to the same opportunities and the same, fair treatment. That if you actively promote equality and diversity (and have a policy to match) then the Council will thrive, and people of all backgrounds can come together for the benefit of those they serve.

We feel the recommendations the Task Group are putting forward will enhance an inclusive culture to ensure that employees are valued and have the same access to all opportunities whatever their differences.

**Councillor Peter McDonald  
Chairman, Equalities Task Group**

## Summary of Recommendations

After consideration of the evidence available and interviewing witnesses the Task Group have proposed the following recommendations, supporting evidence can be found under the relevant chapters within the main body of this report.

### **Chapter 1 – The Council’s Equalities Strategy**

<b>Recommendation 1</b>
That an annual Equalities Report be prepared for 2021 and annually thereafter.
<b>Financial Implications for recommendations:</b> There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Legal Implications for recommendations:</b> There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Resource Implications:</b> Officer time in preparing the report.

<b>Recommendation 2</b>
That a question in respect of IOS certification (or equivalent) is included in the Contractors’ Questionnaire in respect of Equalities.
<b>Financial Implications for recommendations:</b> There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Legal Implications for recommendations:</b> There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Resource Implications:</b> Officer time in checking the response.

## Chapter 2 – Human Resources

<b>Recommendation 3</b>
That when the new ERP system is in use, the data collated by it in respect of HR issues be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.
<b>Financial Implications:</b> There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Legal Implications:</b> There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Resource Implications:</b> Officer time.

<b>Recommendation 4</b>
a) That clear guidelines are put in place in respect of the secondment process (which would include some sort of appeals process) and made accessible to all staff; and b) That a formal progression policy be put in place and made accessible to all staff.
<b>Financial Implications:</b> There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Legal Implications:</b> There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Resource Implications:</b> Officer time.

## **Chapter 3 – Community and Engagement Strategy**

<b>Recommendation 5</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) That a specific section on Equalities be included within the annual Community Survey; and</li><li>b) That the Overview and Scrutiny Board (or Members of the Equalities Task Group) are involved in the preparation of the questions to be included.</li></ul>
<b>Financial Implications:</b>  There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Legal Implications:</b>  There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
<b>Resource Implications:</b>  Officer time.

## **Background Information**

Councillor H. Rone-Clarke, together with a representative from within the local community, presented a topic proposal form containing proposed terms of reference for a Task Group entitled Identifying and Addressing Racial Disparities within Bromsgrove District Council's operations. Councillor Rone-Clarke highlighted the importance of the authority, constantly looking within itself and identifying issues with regards to race and striving to make improvements. It was highlighted that this was not a political venture, but one of constant self-improvement.

Following consideration of the topic proposal at its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020, the Board agreed that a Task Group should be set up and appointed Councillor P. McDonald as its Chairman at that meeting and requested that the Group report back with its findings within 6 months.

At the August meeting of the Board, the membership of the Task Group was confirmed. Due to the interest shown in the Task Group and recognising that it was sometimes difficult to organising ad hoc meetings that were convenient for everyone, it was agreed that there would be a quorum set to ensure that those who had put their names forward were committed to the work of the Task Group.

Following its initial meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> August, the Task Group also agreed to amend the Terms of Reference to include all those protected characteristics covered by the Equalities Act 2010. The changes were reported back to the main Board at its meeting in September, when it was agreed that the name of the Task Group would be updated to simply "the Equalities Task Group". At its initial meeting the Task Group also recognised that the scope of the Task Group was wide reaching and therefore it was agreed that it would concentrate on three particular areas within the Council and these are reflected in the chapters within this report.

The Task Group has held 8 meetings in total since that date and held discussions with a number of key witnesses. The Task Group has reviewed a number of the Council's policies and largely concentrated its investigation on issues which impacted on its staff. This was to ensure that everyone was treated fairly from an equalities perspective and that those policies were readily available for staff and reviewed on a regular basis. The Task Group also briefly looked at community engagement and how this could be improved to ensure that all residents had the opportunity to feel comfortable and be treated fairly, when dealing with the Council and when giving their views.



## **Chapter 1**

### **The Council's Equalities Strategy**

One of the first documents the Task Group reviewed was the Council's Equalities Strategy, as it was keen to ensure that this was both regularly reviewed and updated and easily accessible to everyone.

Following the review of that document the Task Group prepared a number of questions for the Policy Manager to respond to at its next meeting. Those questions covered a number of areas and are detailed below for information.

- a) You have provided data for those with protected characteristics and ethnicities working at the Council. Please advise how often this was updated and whether historic data was available for comparison purposes.
- b) How the Council gave due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in order to advance equal opportunities and foster good relations within the Council.
- c) How the Council ensures that any contractors it uses adhere to the Equalities Act.
- d) Whether the Council produced an Annual Equalities Report and if so when was this last produced and where can a copy be located.
- e) How the Equalities Policy was monitored to ensure that it was being adhered to.

The Policy Manager responded to each point that had been raised in detail and explained that employee data was collated annually but could be done more frequently if needed. Staff were encouraged to share this data; however, it was highlighted that there was no legal obligation for them to do so. It was also explained that it was important for staff to understand why the data was being collected and that it was not used to identify an individual. The Policy Manager explained that there was a new system being brought in to use in the Spring of 2021, which would allow for more useful data to be collated, unfortunately historic data would not be migrated to this system.

Details of the new system were provided – it was an Enterprise Resource System, which was initially for the Finance Team, but it was explained that there was an integrated suite of software which could be added on which covered Human Resources and Payroll systems. The system was used globally and for a variety of organisations.

Members were pleased to learn that the provision of this data was something which had been discussed at Corporate Management Team and that it was hoped to carry out a “drive” on collecting the data through attending team meetings and explaining why it was important and how the data was used, whilst still giving people the option not to provide it. It was further confirmed that, in respect of the recruitment of staff a form went out with all application forms, but again, there was no obligation for it to be completed and returned.

The Policy Manager confirmed that the collection of this type of data was something which lots of authorities struggled to gather, as it was something which came up regularly at area group meetings that she attended. Members agreed that it was useful to know that it was not just this Council that struggled to gather the data and that it was something which was taken seriously, and every effort was made to collect it where possible. The importance of having robust data was also discussed and again it was hoped that the new system would help to provide this going forward. Members were mindful of the need for the data to be sufficient to be used meaningfully and that some people were often cautious about sharing this information for a variety of reasons.

Members questioned whether there was any data in respect of the percentage of people who had or had not completed the information. The Policy Manager explained that this was different for each of the characteristics, so would be hard to extract the data. Again, if limited numbers had provided it, the data would also not necessarily be meaningful. However, it was confirmed that for gender and age it was nearly 100% but for the other protected characteristics (as detailed in the terms of reference for the Task Group) it was not so many. It was acknowledged that it was difficult to know how much of the data collected was accurate. The Policy Manager confirmed that this was very much the case in respect of disabilities, as it was often clear that people had a disability but chose, for whatever reason, not to disclose it. It was acknowledged by everyone that work needed to be done to get the message across that by collecting the data the Council was able to better support its staff.

The Policy Manager provided details of the dignity at work training which had been undertaken throughout the Council. This had been a bespoke session which had been interactive and designed specifically for the Council by an external company. It had been well received and work was being carried out to ensure this reached everyone, as due to sickness etc some people had not been able to attend. It was acknowledged that the planned "mop up" sessions had not yet taken place and a further delay in rectifying this had been caused by the pandemic. People also received updates via net consent, which was a format where a presentation or policy was delivered through staff IT and they were then unable to log in to other Council systems until they had read and agreed the policy, sometimes this was also followed up with a short test. It was however acknowledged that there was a need to find a balance in respect of things such as these being sent out without staff feeling as if they had been bombarded with information and the importance of their responsibilities.

Support was provided to staff in various ways and the Policy Manager gave an example where she had herself provided support to a member of staff. Her team also managed the translation and interpretation policy for the Council and Equality impact assessments were also carried out where needed, again with her team supported officers with these. It was also noted that a large piece of work was currently being undertaken in respect of accessibility following new legislation. This referred to all documents provided by the Council in all formats.

The Task Group was also keen to ensure that any contractors used by the organisation had the appropriate policies in place and met all statutory requirements. The Policy Manager explained that whilst contractors were asked whether they adhered to the Equalities Legislation, this was not monitored, and the onus was on the Contractor to ensure that it did so. Members raised concerns around this lack of monitoring and wanted to ensure that everyone, wherever possible was treated equally if they were working at or on behalf of the Council. In respect of the Equalities Questionnaire completed by Contractors the Task Group were aware that this was in the process of being reviewed and suggested that it may be more appropriate for it to include some reference to ISO or equivalent certification. The thinking behind this was that in order to achieve certification the contractor would need to ensure that it not only met the requirements of the certification but adhered to them also. The provision of such certification would remove the onus from the Council in having to check to ensure that the Contractor adhered to the relevant policies.

The Policy Manager explained that she was currently working on an Annual Report. Unfortunately, due to a number of reasons this had not been prepared in recent years. It was hoped that going forward this would be used as a template for future reports and updated and added to each year. It was however highlighted that, it was not a requirement within the Council's Equalities Strategy to prepare an annual report and there was no legal requirement to produce one, although it was acknowledged that the production of one was beneficial. The Equalities Strategy was regularly reviewed, and the next review would take place in March 2021. Again, in some areas there was still not sufficient data to make it meaningful and this was something which it was hoped would improve in the future. Members were keen for an annual report to be produced as it was felt that it sent a clear message to both staff and residents that the Council took the matter seriously and was also an opportunity to not only highlight areas where improvement was needed but to monitor improvements in the future and showcase the areas of achievement and the work the Council was undertaking to ensure it met the requirements of the Equalities Act.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

<b>Recommendation 1</b>
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That an annual Equalities Report be prepared for 2021 and annually thereafter.
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<b>Recommendation 2</b>
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That a question in respect of IOS certification (or equivalent) is included in the Contractors' Questionnaire in respect of Equalities.
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## **Chapter 2**

### **Human Resources**

The Task Group considered three areas, when looking at the Human Resources processes and policies that were currently in place at the Council. It was felt that these areas were the most important in order to ensure that all staff (and prospective employees) were being treated equally and fairly and given the same opportunities by the organisation, whilst also recognising that the needs of each member of staff were very different. The Task Group's recommendations therefore reflect those areas which it investigated in detail.

The Task Group interviewed the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager together with a Union Representative to ensure it had a balanced view of the position. Consideration was given to either inviting staff into a meeting or asking them to complete a short questionnaire, but after giving this matter due consideration it was decided that, due to the ongoing pandemic, it would not be practicable. A number of questions were prepared for discussion with the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager and these are included below for information purposes, as these highlight the particular areas that the Task Group concentrated on. These areas also formed the basis of the discussions with the Union Representative. As there were a number of responses from the Union Representative which Members felt needed further clarification from the officers, the officers were invited back to a further meeting of the Task Group in order to have the opportunity to respond to the comments which had been made. Whilst it was clear from the discussions held with both the officers and the Union Representative that there was a good working relationship between the two, Members acknowledged that there was always room for improvement, and it was important that all concerned continued to work together to ensure a positive outcome for both the organisation and its staff.

The information provided below is a summary of that provided by all those people that were interviewed. The areas discussed were:

#### **Staff Recruitment**

The Task Group concentrated on the following areas when considering the Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy.

- a) Recruitment – the process for external vacancies and where these were advertised.
- b) All applicants with a disability who met the minimum criteria for the vacancy would be interviewed and considered on their abilities - clarification as to whether this was classed as positive discrimination.
- c) Whether the Council had short term contracts for staff and how these were managed and monitored.

The process for filling a vacancy was explained – starting with the initial discussion at Corporate Management Team, when the relevant Head of Service would put forward a case for the need for the new or vacant post to be filled, to the position being advertised usually on the West Midlands Jobs Portal, which was also used for internal vacancies as well as external. This was a platform used by all local authorities in the West Midlands. The link on the Portal would then take any prospective candidate through to the Council's specific pages and the job specification, description, and application form would be available at that stage. If it was a specialist role, perhaps an IT one for example, then it may also be advertised in a specific publication.

Members discussed how the ethnic make-up of the Council influenced the recruitment process and whether or if there was an in balance and how this could be addressed. Officers acknowledged that currently there were some gaps in the data available and therefore it would not be appropriate to use this for such purposes. Reference was again made to the introduction of the new ERP System and a specific area of that system which would cover HR matters (highlighted in the previous chapter of this report) which it was hoped would provide more accurate data that could be used to shape future recruitment as part of the wider strategy. Officers were urged to be more forward thinking within the recruitment process to ensure that the Council was able to recruit people from a wider range of communities. It needed to promote the availability of flexible working hours, the ability to work from home and childcare support, as these were areas which were now, more than ever, important to employees, following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Members were provided with information in respect of fixed term contracts and it was noted that currently there were 41 in place, which were managed by the relevant service area. Such posts were arranged by the relevant area for a number of reasons, with the introduction of the new system it was hoped that these would be better managed and more detailed information made available. It was confirmed that if any of these fixed term contracts were replaced with a permanent post, the person currently in the role would still need to apply for it through the usual route and would not automatically be awarded the position. There was a clear recruitment process which should be followed throughout to ensure the process was open and transparent.

The importance of data being available in respect of all aspects of recruitment was discussed by the Task Group and it was keen to ensure that this data (which would hopefully be provided through the new ERP System) was monitored on a regular basis to ensure improvements were made and achievements highlighted.

## Secondment to Other Departments

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager provided information as to what secondment meant and how this was handled at the Council. As it was apparent that there was not a set policy in respect of this the main area for discussion by the Task Group was the need for a clear

explanation of the process and how it was managed in order to ensure that there was a fair process in place for all staff.

It was explained to the Task Group that a secondment was a temporary transfer to another area, whilst the person's substantive role remained open to them to return to at the end of the set period of the secondment. The post would be advertised internally and if a person was interested in that secondment post then, after going through the recruitment process and with their current manager's agreement, they could be moved to that post, whilst retaining the ability to return to their main post in the future. It was seen as an opportunity for both the employee and the employer as it allowed someone from another team who may have transferrable skills to use those skills and expand their knowledge within the Council environment.

Whilst it was understood that secondment opportunities were advertised through the recruitment process, concerns were raised that some staff may not have easy access to this and were unaware or did not fully understand the meaning of secondment and the opportunities available to them. Concerns were also raised in respect of it being at the manager's discretion to allow a member of staff to be released for a secondment post. It was suggested that there should be a more formal process put in place with the opportunity for a member of staff to appeal against a manager's decision, or at least for a full and open discussion to take place in order for all those concerned to understand why a request for secondment had been turned down. It was felt that this would ensure that all staff members were treated equally and provided an open and transparent process for everyone concerned. There was also discussion around the length of time a secondment should and did actually last, as it was felt that if these went on for any length of time, it was not beneficial to the member of staff or the team that they had been seconded from, as it would leave a level of uncertainty for all concerned. If a secondment went on for any length of time, it was thought that a permanent post should be considered and not a secondment.

### Staff Progression within the Organisation

Task Group Members were keen to ensure that all staff were given the opportunity to progress if they so wished within the Council. It was felt important to retain staff and encourage them to aim to continually improve their skills if they wished too. Concerns were raised that this was not always the case and that it often was dependant on the area that a member of staff worked in as to what support and training was available, which if this was the case, was not acceptable. The following three areas in respect of progression were those which the Task Group mainly concentrated on for the purposes of this investigation.

- a) Provide a clear definition of "progression".
- b) Progression Policy – as the Council did not have a specific policy what steps were in place to help staff progress. For example, what training opportunities were available.

- c) Whether a record of the number of staff who had progressed within the Council was kept.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager explained that it was difficult to define progression, as each person had a different view on it, for example some people would be happy in the same job but want to get the most out of it and others would want to use a job to develop skills and move forward in a more career-based way. It was also noted that in the current fast-moving climate of employment, many roles that people were in had by the nature of them changed significantly from when they first started, so it could be said that they had technically “progressed”, albeit indirectly and not in the formal sense. It was also highlighted that people were much more flexible these days, so again roles would have developed in some particular areas, whilst in others those roles would be much more defined.

It was explained that these areas, together with others, would be discussed at the regular 1-2-1 meetings which managers carried out with each member of their team and again at an annual Personal Development Review (PDR) in more detail. There was a standard format for these meetings, but they could also be flexible to meet the needs of an individual and/or the requirements of the line manager. The format that was followed for each individual staff member would be discussed and agreed with them at the outset of these meetings. There would be an opportunity at those meetings to talk about transferrable skills and training opportunities, either at the request of the staff member or the line manager if an area where this was needed was identified. It was explained that the current HR system was not able to provide detailed data around cases where people had “progressed”, but it was anticipated that the new system would be able to do so. It was confirmed that the PDR would be held annually and reviewed six monthly with 1-2-1s taking place regularly, but again this was down to the staff member and line manager to agree an appropriate timescale.

Members generally agreed that progression had a different meaning for each individual, and it was also commented that in some cases people did not wish to progress but were happy within their role and it would be wrong to make them feel pressured into moving on if they did not wish to do so. Officers confirmed that it would be down to personal choice and a member of staff would not be put under any unnecessary pressure. It was therefore noted that whilst the Council’s policy of progression was embedded within the appraisal process, Members were keen to ensure that the appraisals were carried out and the appropriate opportunities made available to everyone. It was agreed therefore that a more formal approach should be taken in respect of progression, which provided staff with clear guidelines set out in a policy of how this worked, what they might expect from it and how they would be supported through the process.

Conflicting information was provided in respect of those staff members who regularly received 1-2-1s and PDRs and Members highlighted the importance of these taking place across the board to ensure all staff were given the same opportunities to progress if they so wished or to take part in any relevant training

to either support their current roles or to help them progress. It was acknowledged that there was always some room for improvement and that this was something which was reviewed on a regular basis. If a member of staff was not happy with the manner in which they were being supported by a manager there was always the opportunity for them to speak to a more senior manager or for them to speak to an HR Advisor – each service area had a designated HR Advisor who was available for anyone to speak to about concerns that they may have.

Concerns were also raised in respect of training that was provided and made available to staff, Members were keen to ensure that any training provided was appropriate for those receiving it and cost effective. They saw little benefit in providing sessions which people did not attend for whatever reason, particularly if an external training provider was being used as it was important for the Council to get value for money from any sessions it organised. They were also keen to ensure that staff were given the opportunity to attend training sessions where appropriate, as they were mindful that in some cases, for example refuse collectors, the release of them for say half a day, could impact on service delivery, so may deter them from attending such sessions.

It was suggested that progression added value to the Council and that currently there was no evidence to say how many staff had progressed and whether the policy was therefore inclusive of everyone. It was explained that whilst a member of staff could say they had progressed there was currently nothing on the current HR system used to support this, so any data would be anecdotal. Whilst this hard evidence was not present, Officers were satisfied through talking to people and from internal intelligence that this did happen in particular areas. However, it was accepted that there was not the definitive data available to support this. Again, it was hoped that with the new ERP System this would improve and allow a better monitoring process to be in place and it would be an area which was reviewed on a regular basis going forward.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

<b>Recommendation 3</b>
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That when the new ERP system is in use, the data collated by it in respect of HR issues be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.
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<b>Recommendation 4</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) That clear guidelines are put in place in respect of the secondment process (which would include some sort of appeals process) and made accessible to all staff; and</li><li>b) That a formal progression policy be put in place and made accessible to all staff.</li></ul> |
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## **Chapter 3**

### **Community and Engagement Strategy**

During the interview with the Policy Manager Members asked about how community engagement influenced the Council's policies. The Policy Manager explained to the Task Group how community engagement was used to influence the Council Plan through the annual community survey. The results of these surveys were shared with the Corporate Management Team and also through Cabinet. They were used by Managers within reports and questions or smaller surveys could be used for a particular piece of work for a specific area. An example of this was when it was used within Leisure Services and helped to shape what services were provided to meet the needs of the residents. There had been a good return rate of nearly 1k for this particular survey.

The Task Group was provided with a brief overview of the results of the most recent Community Survey and, the three questions which had been included in respect of equalities. Members were pleased to see that there had also been a section provided for free text to allow residents to respond on a more general basis. It was noted that the majority of responses had been positive, with the Council being fair and inclusive.

Information was also provided in respect of a recent staff survey which was based around working from home. The Council had felt, that due to the current situation arising from the impact of the pandemic, it was important to ensure that all staff, who were working from home were being supported appropriately and given the opportunity to share any concerns or specific issues they faced. The Council was also mindful of the impact of working from home on staff's mental health and wellbeing and was keen to ensure that wherever possible this was addressed, and suitable mechanisms put in place for staff to be able to access any support that was needed. Members were provided with a number of outcomes which had been put in place following this survey.

The Task Group discussed the importance of hearing from residents about their experiences and how they felt the Council were meeting the needs of those from the protected characteristics groups and it was therefore suggested that more detailed questions around equalities could be included in the next community survey. Members of the Task Group would be happy to work with the Policy Manager in formulating these questions to ensure that they focused on the right areas and covered any specific areas which were highlighted to Members whilst working in their local communities.

It was also discussed as to how best the Community Survey could be promoted to ensure as many residents as possible completed it as it was acknowledged that robust data was needed in order for it to be used in a meaningful way. Members were keen to add their support to any campaign that was put in place to promote the survey and were happy to work with officers to get the best results for all concerned. It was vitally important that community groups

engaged with the Council to help make any necessary improvements in the future.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

<b>Recommendation 5</b>
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- |   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) That a specific section on Equalities be included within the annual Community Survey; and</li><li>b) That the Overview and Scrutiny Board (or Members of the Equalities Task Group) are involved in the preparation of the questions to be included.</li></ul> |
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## **Areas to Note**

There was one particular area which the Task Group considered briefly at its final meeting and whilst they did not feel it appropriate to make any recommendation on this matter, they would like this to be looked at in more detail and action taken if felt appropriate. This was in respect of compliments and complaints received by the Council and there were two specific areas which the Task Group discussed and wished to be highlighted:

- Compliments and Complaints page and the Customer Care Pledge on the Council's website – it was suggested that these be in a more prominent position (in order to make them easier for residents to locate) and promoted through the Council's social media on a more regular basis.
- Members also discussed that it would be useful for them to receive regular updates on the number and type of compliments and complaints that were received. It was acknowledged that this was available through the Corporate Dashboard, but it was felt that this should be something which was received at a committee, such as the Overview and Scrutiny Board. It was noted that in previous years, this was a report which had been received by the Board on a quarterly basis, as part of its role of managing the Council's performance.

It should also be noted that as part of the investigation it carried out, the Task Group did also discuss and consider whether it was appropriate to "invite" in members of the public to one of its meeting or to set up a survey of its own to get the views of residents. However, after discussion it was agreed that in light of the current position and the impact of Covid-19 that logistically this would not be practicable and that in the current difficult times there may not be sufficient responses in order to provide meaningful data. Hence, the suggestion that future Community Surveys included more questions around equalities as detailed in the previous chapter of this report. There were a number of Members of the Task Group who had contacts with a number of community groups in their Wards and it was agreed that they would support the Policy Manager in making contact with those groups to encourage further community engagement. It was suggested that other Members may also have a number of contacts which could prove helpful to the Policy Manager and this should be explored further as the Covid-19 restrictions were reduced.

It was felt important that all Members played a part in improving and supporting community engagement in any way that they could.

## **Appendix 1**

### **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD**

#### **Equalities Task Group**

#### **Terms of Reference as at August 2020**

The Identifying and Addressing Racial Disparities within Bromsgrove District Council's Operations Task Group has been set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Board to carry out detailed scrutiny/pre-scrutiny of the above topic.

1. The Task Group be made up of 9 Members with a quorum of 5. The Task Group will meet throughout the next six months at intervals to be decided by the Group.
2. Meetings will be restricted to 1.5 hours in order for the Group to remain focused (with the option to extend should it be deemed necessary).
3. The Task Group agreed that if Members missed more than 2 meetings then they would no longer be on the Task Group.
4. The Task Group will be a standing item on the agenda of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and either a verbal or written report will be provided at each of the Board's meetings.
5. The Task Group is able to make recommendations to the Overview & Scrutiny Board who will then put forward its recommendations for consideration by Cabinet or directly to Cabinet/Council.
6. The Task group is expected to complete the investigation in six months and provide its findings and recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in a written report at that time.
7. Should the Task Group not complete its work within that timescale, then an interim report will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board with a request for further time to complete the investigations.

#### **Aims and Objectives of the Task Group**

The Task Group will undertake a scrutiny investigation into Identifying and Addressing Disparities of those who come under the protected characteristics communities (as detailed within the Equalities Act 2010) within Bromsgrove District Council's Operations and will cover the following areas, although this list is not exclusive:

# Agenda Item 5

- Identify if any disparities exist within the Council's operations.
- How easy is it for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME), together with those groups included within the protected characteristics communities of the Equalities Act 2010, residents to access council support?
- Identify ways that these disparities, if any, can be addressed

For information, the protected characteristics communities within the Equalities Act 2010 are as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

## **Appendix 2**

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

#### **Council Documents**

Equalities Strategy

Engagement Strategy

Recruitment and Selection Policy

Contractors Equalities Questionnaire

#### **External Documents**

Equalities Act 2010

## **Appendix 3**

### **WITNESSES**

The Task Group considered evidence from the following sources before making its recommendations:

#### **Internal Witnesses:**

Deb Poole – Head of Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy

Rebecca Green – Policy Manger

Becky Talbot – Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager

Laney Walsh – Unison Representative

**Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services**

Bromsgrove District Council, Parkside Offices, Market Street

Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B61 8DA

Telephone: (01527) 881443

Email: [scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk)



### Cabinet

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#### GREEN HOMES FUNDING

<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder</b>		Councillors Shirley Webb/ Margaret Sherrey
<b>Portfolio Holder Consulted</b>		Yes
<b>Relevant Head of Service</b>		Judith Willis
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Name:</b> Kath Manning <b>Job Title:</b> Climate Change Officer <b>Contact email:</b> kath.manning@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk <b>Contact Tel:</b> Ext 3201, Ext 3044	
<b>Wards Affected</b>		No specific ward relevance.
<b>Ward Councillor(s) consulted</b>		n/a
<b>Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Affordable and sustainable homes</li> <li>- Living independent, active &amp; healthy lives</li> <li>- Work and financial independence</li> <li>- Communities which are safe, well maintained &amp; green</li> </ul>
Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

#### 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet **RECOMMEND** that:

- 1) The Capital and Revenue Budgets are increased to receive Bromsgrove District Council's Green Homes Grant scheme Local Authority Delivery Part 2 allocation of £476, 900.
- 2) Delegated authority is granted to the Head of Community & Housing Services in consultation with Portfolio Holders for Housing and Climate Change to administer the funding received in line with the grant conditions.

### Cabinet

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#### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) have allocated £59.95m of funding to Phase 2 of the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) element of the Green Homes Grant scheme, which runs until December 2021.

The distribution of this funding is being managed via Local Energy Hubs (the Midlands Energy Hub in the case of Bromsgrove District).

The allocations have been calculated to reflect the number and proportion of EPC Band E, F and G properties within the Local Authority area: for Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) this will be £474,150.

The deadline to accept the allocation is 15<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Note this is before the next Full Council meeting and therefore if Cabinet agree the Recommendations, then a decision under Urgency Procedures will be required. (Insufficient detail was known before the last democratic cycle to be able to prepare a Report for Cabinet.)

- 2.2. Key requirements related to the grant scheme are as follows:

- Funded measures must improve the properties' energy efficiency, as measured by the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure for Energy Rating of Dwellings (SAP) ratings.
- Measures must be targeted at properties with the worst SAP ratings: Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) score D (up to 50% of properties), E, F and G. Alternatively for park homes, the local authority can outline why the stock is energy inefficient and high cost to the homeowner. Existing park home EPC and energy cost data will enable BDC to demonstrate this for their Part 2 proposal.
- Decarbonisation of energy systems is integral to the scheme, so no fossil fuel powered measures will be funded.
- The occupants of the properties in the scheme must be overall at above average risk of fuel poverty: across the scheme, most households must have an income of less than £30k or other proxies for fuel poverty risk such as receipt of means tested benefits can be used.
- The average capital works per property cannot exceed £10k.
- The deadline for completion of funded projects is December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021, unless extended by the Midlands Energy Hub with permission from BEIS and HM Treasury as required.
- Any tenures may be funded, though the proportion of funding differs between tenures (see 3. Financial Implications).

### Cabinet

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- 2.3. BDC took part in a successful Green Homes Grants LAD Part 1a bid to fund works to privately owned park homes, where there is a high proportion of vulnerable residents living in E, F or G rated properties, for which the completion deadline has been extended to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021. It is anticipated that the Part 2 funding will be used to continue the park home scheme, with the possibility of including other appropriate privately owned or social housing properties should funding allow. Regarding social housing properties, this could include any Housing Association stock in Bromsgrove District of a poorer energy efficiency, including but not limited to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) as the largest holder of social housing in Bromsgrove District.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. £435,000 is a capital grant for installation of 'Eligible Measures', in 'Eligible Households', by 'Eligible Contractors' each as defined in the MOU in Annex 1 and Annex 2 in accordance with the Midlands Energy Hub Green Homes Grant: Local Authority Delivery Phase 2 Guidance for Local Authorities.
- 3.2. An additional £39,150 of grant funding can be used for administration and enabling works and can be allocated to capital or revenue budgets at the discretion of the Council.
- 3.3. On signing the Award Letter or once MEH has received the funding from BEIS whichever is later, an additional fixed cost of £2,750 is provide to the council with their mobilisation payment for Stock Analysis or modelling requirements to support proposal development and future energy efficiency schemes.
- 3.4. A full project proposal and ongoing reporting (see Operational Implications) is required for receipt of the full Part 2 grant allocation.
- 3.5. Any owner occupier properties, such as the targeted park homes are required by BEIS to be fully funded using the grant monies. For privately rented or social housing properties, Green Homes Grant funding can only fund up to two-thirds of the cost of measures, up to a maximum of £5000.

### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The general power of competence in s1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the council to undertake such a project.
- 4.2 Given the level of spend and timescale, an OJEU compliant framework will be used to procure delivery of the works (in progress).

### Cabinet

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- 4.3 A legal review of the Grant Conditions will be undertaken prior to acceptance.

#### 5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

##### Relevant Strategic Purposes

- 5.1 The funding aligns as follows:

- **Finding somewhere to live:** improving housing stock
- **Living independent, active & healthy lives:** healthier home environments
- **Aspirations, work & financial independence:** addressing fuel poverty
- **Communities which are safe, well maintained & green:** reducing carbon emissions

##### Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 This funding is specifically to reduce energy consumption with an emphasis on decarbonisation, so is key for addressing Climate Change.

#### 6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

##### Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1. Allocation of the funding will be based on criteria set by BEIS and will not be based on personal characteristics other than related to income.
- 6.2. Equality and Diversity considerations particularly in relation to accessibility will be included in procurement of Contractors and the design of the project, with the Policy Team consulted as necessary.

##### Operational Implications

- 6.3 The Climate Change Officer will oversee delivery, working closely with:
- the procured Customer Journey support agency
  - the organisation designated by the Midlands Energy Hub to oversee and monitor the scheme, including provision of technical support.
- 6.5 Once contractors are procured, detailed technical surveys, Retrofit Assessments and pricing will take place, to enable production of the proposal.

### Cabinet

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#### 6.4 Key Dates:

15/4/21	Deadline to enable signing of award letter and enable release of mobilisation payment
24/5/21	Final deadline for submitting proposal and accessing full funding allocation
July	Interim report
December 31 <sup>st</sup> 2021	Delivery completion deadline

#### 7. RISK MANAGEMENT

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
No funding	Benefits not realised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept funding</li> </ul>
Timescales	Deadlines missed, funding not accessed or needs to be returned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation already in progress.</li> <li>• Close communication with Midlands Energy Hub regarding potential delays.</li> <li>• Any risks related to returning funding will be reviewed with legal once full Grant Conditions are available.</li> </ul>
Covid19	Transmission and resultant harm, impact on timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid-secure practices.</li> <li>• Health and Safety involvement in project planning.</li> </ul>
Insufficient experience of low carbon technologies	Measures underperform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expert advice from PEEP and Midlands Energy Hub</li> </ul>

### Cabinet

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#### 8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background papers:

- Midlands Energy Hub (MEH) Green Homes Grants Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Part 2 – Grant Letter Bromsgrove
- Midlands Energy Hub (MEH) Green Homes Grants Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Part 2 Guidance

#### 9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Shirley Webb Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being  Cllr Margaret Sherrey Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services (including Climate Change)	10/3/2021
Lead Director / Head of Service	Judith Willis Head of Community & Housing Services	10/3/2021
Financial Services	Kate Goldey Senior Business Support Accounting Technician  Chris Forrester Head of Finance and Customer Services	3/3/2021  11/3/2021
Legal Services	Clare Flanagan Principal Solicitor	4/3/2021
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	n/a	
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	Kath Manning	Report author

**Cabinet**  
2021

31<sup>st</sup> March

**Finance Monitoring Quarter 3 2020/21**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling Services
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Chris Forrester Head of Finance and Customer Services
Report Author	Name: Kate Goldey Job Title: Senior Business Support Accounting Technician Contact email: k.goldey@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881208
Wards Affected	none
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	n/a
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE and note –**

The current financial position in relation to revenue and capital budgets for the financial period April 2020 – December 2020.

**That Cabinet RECOMMENDS to Council the: -**

- 1.1 Approval of an increase to the Capital programme 2020/21 of match funding from PCC for digital upgrade of CCTV £19k **see 3.6.1**
  
- 1.2 Approval of the increase in the capital programme of £30k for 2021/22, £20k 2022/23 for Welfare and business improvements at Bromsgrove Sporting **see 3.6.2**
  
- 1.3 Approval of an increase to the revenue budget by £4k to be funded by reserves to help fund a school’s financial literacy programme see **3.3.1**

**2. BACKGROUND**

To report to Cabinet on the Council's financial position for Revenue and Capital for the financial period April 2020 – December 2020.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 This report provides details of the financial performance of the Council for 2020/21. The report reflects the finances across the new strategic purposes to enable Members to be aware of the level of income and expenditure attributed to each area and how this compares to budget. The summary below shows the financial revenue position for the Council for the period April to December 2020/21.
  
- 3.2 Financial reports are sent to budget holders on a monthly basis. As part of this process a detailed review is undertaken with support from the finance team to ensure that all issues are considered and significant savings or cost pressures are addressed. This report explains the key variances to budget for 2020/21.
  
- 3.3 The £11.812m original budget as included in the table below is made up of the budget approved in February 2020.

In addition the Latest Budget 2020/21 of £11.902m includes the net transfers from reserves of £90k which is shown in **appendix 2**.



### Revenue Budget Summary – Overall Council Financial Year 2020/21

Please note figures have been rounded

Strategic Purpose	Original Budget 2020/21 £'000	Revised budget 2020/21 £'000	Budget to date 2020/21 £'000	Actuals to date 2020/21 £'000	Variance to date 2020/21 £'000	Projected outturn 2020/21 £'000	Projected Variance 2020/21 £'000
Affordable and sustainable home	695	863	683	656	-28	817	-46
Communities which are safe, well maintained, and green	4,922	4,857	3,322	3,483	161	5,130	273
Enabling the Authority	5,357	5,337	3,905	3,823	-81	5,308	-29
Living independent, active and healthy lives	377	457	245	184	-60	473	16
Run and grow a successful business	-51	-112	-117	487	604	733	845
Work and financial independence	512	501	-236	63	299	633	133
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11,812</b>	<b>11,902</b>	<b>7,803</b>	<b>8,697</b>	<b>894</b>	<b>13,094</b>	<b>1,193</b>
<b>Financing</b>	<b>-11,812</b>	<b>-11,902</b>	<b>-10,970</b>	<b>-11,090</b>	<b>-120</b>	<b>-12,002</b>	<b>-100</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-3,167</b>	<b>-2,393</b>	<b>774</b>	<b>1,093</b>	<b>1,093</b>

#### Financial Commentary:

It is important to note that the council has received £1,255k in COVID-19 grants in four tranches from central government to date of which £468k has been spent. This means that there is £786k remaining which can be used to mitigate some of the overspends/losses as shown above and explained in more detail below as appropriate. It has recently been announced that the Council will receive a fifth tranche of grant £411k which is still waiting to be received.

The Council has also filled in returns to central government with the expectation that a proportion of the losses the council has experienced detailed on the returns due to COVID-19 will be met by government which should reduce the deficit position detailed above. The Council has received the first quarter of this grant and has been factored into the above figures. The Council is still awaiting confirmation on the second quarter grant and if and when this will be received.

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There are a number of variances across the strategic purposes. The summary above shows the 2020/21 revenue position for the Council to the end of quarter 3 and the main variations are as a result of the below.

**Affordable and sustainable home (£46k projected underspend)**

The costs associated with homeless prevention, housing strategy and charges are all included in the strategic purpose.

- The main variance is within Land charges **27k**. This is due to receiving additional income against the budgeted target along with a reduction in fees we pay Worcester County Council which is due to some fees now no longer being rechargeable.

**Communities which are safe, well maintained and green (£273k projected overspend)**

These budgets include those relating mainly to environmental services, planning, CCTV and other activities to deliver against the purpose ensuring an area is both safe and attractive for the community.

- Bereavement services have received less income than expected from burial fees going in to the third quarter of **£36k** due to the pandemic restrictions that have been in force stopping some service items such as cremated remains burials. It is therefore projected this will continue for the foreseeable future and projected shortfall in income will be **£46k** by the end of the financial year 2020/21.
- Building Control have seen an increase in activity in the local construction sector after the initial lockdown in quarter 1 with a significant upturn in demand once matters normalised. This appears to have plateaued and introduced a false peak. Some concern is felt regarding the negative effect of any future local lock down. Whilst the sector is expected to continue the winter months often see a decrease in demand. The forecasted shortfall in income is projected therefore at **£52k**.
- Core Environmental operations have some underspends on salaries. It is expected they will be filled going into the final quarter of the year and it is projected to show an overall saving for 2020/21 of **£29k**.
- Development Control have a shortfall in income in quarter 3 of 2020/21 due to the profiled budget **£69k**. It is therefore projected this will continue for the remainder of the financial year and its expected shortfall for the year is **£74k**.
- Environmental services management and support teams have made savings on training budgets which is due to Covid-19 and also on ICT budgets as now a later than planned implementation of the new environmental services system **£32k**.

- Environmental services Place teams have some underspends on salary savings **£11k**. This is due a review of service requirements and it is hoped after delayed recruitment due to COVID-19 these posts will be filled into the third quarter and projected therefore by year end to show savings of **£16k**.
- Stores and Depot have increased costs due to security issues which will be resolved later in the year. This will see a projected overspend by the end of the year of **£43k**.
- There is an underspend in strategic planning due to temporary salary vacancies. These are planned to be filled going into the new financial year **£57k**.
- There are some salary savings in the Tree management team following a services delivery review **£80k**. While some posts have been recruited too there are some that remain vacant. It is therefore projected there will be a underspend by year end **£102k**.
- Waste management have some additional commercial Waste Disposal Costs. A Business case has been put forward to address this going forwards in the budget. There are also increased costs from Severn Trent on disposal of septic waste which is being challenged and overspends on additional overtime due to out of Hours Callout costs, which is also being reviewed corporately. This has now been addressed and amended in the budget for the new financial year **£301k**.

### Enabling the Authority ( £38k projected underspend)

All support services and corporate overheads are held within the enabling purpose. These include IT, HR, Finance, Management team and other support costs.

- There is a variance in Commercialism due to some additional costs required in 2020/21 **£26k**.
- There is a variance in Corporate services which is due to a vacancy management factor target to be met. This will be reallocated from other services by the end of the financial year. See savings monitoring at point 4 to this report **£86k**.
- Corporate services also have an overspend due to higher than originally budgeted for pension costs. Officers are currently looking into how this deficit can be mitigated **£129k**
- Customer Services, Democratic Services and member support and ICT have temporary salary underspends projected **£151k**.
- Legal services expenditure for external support for commercial projects has reduced over the past 12 months due to lockdown and a reduction in working times. This is likely to return in the coming months **£32k**.
- Training and organisational development have underspend on the corporate training budget due COVID-19 having had a direct impact on our ability to continue with all training, some training was paused, and we are currently

reviewing how we will continue to provide the necessary training in light of the pandemic, including moving to remote training as appropriate **£47k.**

#### **Living independent, active & healthy lives (£16k projected overspend)**

There are a number of budgets relating to the delivery of the strategic purpose including Lifeline, Community Transport and Disabled Facilities Grants.

- There is a variance within Business development – Leisure service due to not receiving the first and second quarter income fee for BSLC which is due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have made a claim to the Government for the loss of fees and charges and are currently awaiting an update as to whether we be claim a proportion of the lost amount. This will be allocated to the shortfalls in income for BSLC should the Council receive these monies **£193k.**

Members will also be aware of additional payment made to everyone active in terms of the losses incurred during the forced closure of the site. This has been reflected as transfer from the COVID-19 grant and therefore does not show as an overspend within Business development.

- There are some savings in CCTV & Lifeline and Community transport due to temporary salary vacancies **£25k.**
- Sports & Arts Development and Parks & events have some underspends due to events not taking place in the first and second quarters also due to Covid **£110k.**

#### **Run and grow a successful business (£845k projected overspend)**

The budgets within the strategic purpose include economic development, car parking, all licenses and costs associated with the town and other centres within the District.

- The main overspend is within car parks which is due to the temporary suspension of car parking charges and the reduced income levels throughout this financial year so far which is anticipated to continue to the year end and beyond because of COVID-19 **£694k.** The government have announced a compensation scheme for lost fees and charges income and officers have worked through an application for the second quarter for these funds and are awaiting confirmation.
- Assets & Facilities management have a projected overspend due to the Parkside building only being partially open and therefore a reduction in the SLA (service level agreement) has been received **£81k.**
- There is also a variance on markets which again is due to the impact of COVID-19 **£60k**
- Licences has a shortfall of income in the going into the third quarter of 2020/21 **£23k**

#### **Work and Financial independence (£133k projected overspend)**

The strategic purpose includes all costs relating to the support of benefits and the administration and delivery of Council Tax services and business rates in the District.

- Benefits subsidy has is showing an overspend due to not all the housing benefit overpayments being recovered against the estimated budgeted amount requires **£136k**.
- Revenues has a variance due to a pending service review which is currently underway **£8k**.

#### **Corporate Financing (£100k projected underspend)**

- It is expected that additional costs will be incurred for a Levy payment to the Worcestershire Pool due to the growth of Business Rates in the area from what we had predicted in the initial Government Return at the start of the year. Some of this will be re-distributed back to the Council which would not have been the case if we weren't part of a pooling arrangement.
- This has been netted off against savings on MRP and interest due the Capital programme having delays on certain projects.

#### **3.3.1 Schools Financial literacy programme**

As request at 1.3 £4k is required to help support schools financial literacy programme. The 'Money Wise' financial literacy programme has helped over 1500 11-16 year olds across Waseley Hills High School and Woodrush High School on all aspects of financial education over the academic year, and has allowed young people to leave school with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour to manage their money well. Because of the simple nature of the programme and the way it is designed, it has helped teachers across both schools to develop a cohort approach to the delivery of financial education.

The programme has been taught as a stand-alone subject as well as complementing other parts of the curriculum. For example, careers programme where the aim is to provide students with the skills and confidence for employability in line with the current employment expectations and once in employment the individual will have financial responsibility e.g. setting up bank accounts, paying bills and saving money.

Through utilising the resources over the academic year, 11-16 years olds know; -

- 1) Where money comes from, keeping it safe and the importance of managing it efficiently
- 2) How money plays an important part in the peoples' lives
- 3) Manage risks and emotions associated with money
- 4) How to make informed choices
- 5) Failure to understand risks i.e. loan sharks
- 6) How personal financial choices can affect oneself and others

It has also met, and is being utilised as part of the Gatsby Benchmark of Good Career Guidance as; -

- A stable careers' programme
- Learning about careers and labour market information
- Linking curriculum learning to careers
- Personal guidance

The programme has been taught along the following lines: -

Years 7, 8 & 9 - Learners talked about future aspirations and careers and the monetary as well as educational planning implications linked to various careers - looking at healthy lifestyles and Relationships and linking this into discussions on the living costs of difficult lifestyles.

Years 10 & 11 - Teaching staff stepped up the emphasis on preparing the learners about their life outside school. They began to partake in work experience and learnt how to use bank accounts, budgeting, student life and revisit the financial implication of various lifestyles.

The schools see the 'Money Wise' programme as being of the utmost importance in helping to send their learners out in the 'Big Wide World' with a comprehensive tool kit of techniques for success to benefit not just the individual student but also the community as a whole.

As many of the pupils involved in the programme live in areas of pockets of deprivation, the 'Money Wise' programme has had a knock-on effect of students being able to advise and educate their parents about financial responsibilities.

As per previous years, the Children's Safety Education Foundation will be responsible for endorsing each of the resources with your local and mission statement.

Bromsgrove District would be continuing to support the 'Money Wise' financial literacy programme at Secondary schools of choice at a cost of £4k, especially at this time when mental health and young people's well-being are of particular importance during these times of uncertainty and change.

#### 3.4 **Savings Monitoring**

The medium-term financial plan included £510k of savings identified to be delivered during 2020/21. The breakdown of these savings is attached at **appendix 2**. £45k of these identified savings is in relation to reductions in enabling costs.

To quarter 3 £373k in identified savings have been realised against the budgeted April to December savings of £382k.

In addition to the above officers have been required to find further savings throughout the financial year 2020/21 to meet the vacancy factor (£170k) and the enabling services (£45k) targets. At quarter 3 additional savings (above those identified) have been realised of £438k.

#### 3.5 **Cash Management**

##### **Borrowing**

As of the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2020, there were no short-term borrowings. Within the quarter, there had been £7k of short-term interest paid and there was no long-term borrowing.

An interest payable budget had been set of £386k for 2020/21 due to expenditure relating to current capital projects.

##### **Investments**

On 31st December 2020 there were £7.5m investments held. During the quarter, the council received £1,357.85 in interest from treasury investments. The council also incurred negative interest rates charges of £12.88. It has been necessary to make some negative interest rate investments to spread the risk of the council's investment portfolio and adhere to the treasury management strategy's maximum investment limits. Negative interest deposits have only been made with the Government's Debt Management Office deposit facility when the maximum investment limit has been reached with the higher yielding Money Market Fund and when bank balances have been above the £2m risk level.

An interest receivable budget has been set of £161k for 2020/21 for any investments we make

### 3.6 Capital Budgets

#### Capital Budget Summary – Overall Council Financial Year 2020/21

Please note figures have been rounded

Strategic Purpose	Original Budget 2020/21 £'000	Revised budget 2020/21 £'000	Budget to date 2020/21 £'000	Actuals to date 2020/21 £'000	Variance to date 2020/21 £'000	Projected outturn 2020/21 £'000	Projected Variance 2020/21 £'000
Communities which are safe, well maintained, and green	3,481	8,327	6,298	1,530	-4,768	1,913	-6,414
Enabling the Authority	55	392	330	194	-136	218	-174
Living independent, active, and healthy lives	835	1,643	1,232	539	-693	910	-733
Work and financial independence	0	5	3	0	-3	0	-5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,371</b>	<b>10,367</b>	<b>7,864</b>	<b>2,263</b>	<b>-5,600</b>	<b>3,041</b>	<b>-7,326</b>

#### Financial Commentary:

#### Communities which are safe, well maintained and green

These budgets include those relating mainly to Environmental services – Fleet replacement, Finance and Customer Services – Burcot lane and the Regeneration fund and Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services to deliver against the purpose ensuring an area is both safe and attractive for the community.

- The Olev/Ulev Scheme is showing a slight underspend to date but will be expected to be completed by the end of the financial year **£200k**.
- The fleet replacement program is showing an underspend to date and will be projected to still be the case by year end **£416k**. A request to move £95k into



2021/22 to cover the replacement of a tractor as the specification has not been agreed in time and the procurement of a new washbay ramp has proved difficult as a suitable framework has not yet been found. All other vehicles will have been replaced by the end of March 2020/21. Any residual funds in the budget can therefore remain.

- The Infrastructure Works and the depot have been postponed due to the future of site still to be determined. This will be reviewed going into the last quarter of the financial year **£252k**.
- The regeneration fund has had delays this financial year due to the current pandemic and it is therefore hoped this will resume in the new financial year **£4.350m**
- Due to COVID-19 there has been a delay in delivery of the re-landscaping of the recreation ground scheme. This scheme will commence in quarter 2 of the new financial year and a request is made to carry the existing budget into the new financial year **£211k**.

### Enabling the Authority

These budgets include those relating mainly to Environmental services – Computer Systems and Finance and Customer Services – New Enterprise systems to deliver robust and efficient enabling services.

- The variance for this quarter relates to the Fleet management computer system and the Environmental Services Computer system. Suitable systems are being finalised prior to procurement taking place via a Framework **£174k**.

### Living independent, active & healthy lives

There are a number of budgets relating to the delivery of the strategic purpose including Funding for Disabled Facilities Grants, CCTV and Home repairs Assistance.

- The main underspend relates to the Disabled Facilities grant budget (DFG's) there has been little activity on this project in the first year of using a new agency and due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be requested to carry forward the balance remaining into the new financial year 2021/22.

### Work and Financial independence

- This budget relates to the Energy Efficiency grant received for Worcestershire county council it is anticipated this will now be spent in the new financial year and it will be requested to carry forward the budget into 2021/22.

#### 3.6.1 CCTV infrastructure

As requested at 1.1 West Mercia PCC has made available a further £19k CCTV capital grant to support the current digital infrastructure upgrade to the North Worcestershire CCTV scheme.

This further funding is to join the already approved scheme which CCTV Community Services are currently co-ordinating. This will further enhance the CCTV infrastructure upgrade as opposed to the purchase of replacement analogue cameras and once implemented the digital infrastructure will reduce transmission costs from the revenue budget.

Following the successful digitization of the CCTV infrastructure project at Redditch and Bromsgrove and other collaborative initiatives across West Mercia the PCC were keen to make further investment in CCTV across the region, enabling Councils to further enhance and improve the CCTV provision, of which the Police force is a primary beneficiary.

#### 3.6.2 Bromsgrove Sporting football club limited

It is requested at 1.2 for an increase in the capital programme of £50k across the financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23 for funding to support Bromsgrove Sporting FC Ltd.

Bromsgrove Sporting FC Ltd is committed to improving football facilities for all members of the community and fully embraces the need for inclusivity within the sport regardless of age, income, ethnicity, gender, ability, disability, sexual, religious, or moral beliefs. Their intention is to continue to embed the football club within the community through the Community Charter Standard requirements and to ensure that they provide the best possible environment for players, officials, and spectators to enjoy the game whether it be at the First Team level or Junior and Colts levels and is safe, inclusive, and welcoming for all sections of the community to participate.

Furthermore, by working in partnership with the County Football Association, Bromsgrove Council, the Bromsgrove Sporting Supporters Society, local football clubs and other interested parties, we will continue to enhance our ability to provide coaching, training, education, management, and the infrastructure to meet the needs of football in the Bromsgrove area.

They require a total of £50,000 if agreed with the Council to be paid over the financial years 2021/22 and the remainder in financial year 2022/23.

Their proposals are divided into two areas, 'welfare' and 'business improvement'.

**Welfare expenditure as follows:**

Disabled Toilet and New Toilet block

Disabled Persons Viewing Area

Refurbishment of the First Aid Room  
Designation of Disabled Car Parking Spaces.

**Business Improvement as follows:**

Provision of Roller Shutters for two main snack bars  
Refurbishment of Main Bar 'behind house' facilities

These are all dependent on the schedule of funds being released by the Council.

**3.7 Earmarked Reserves**

The position as of 30<sup>th</sup> December 2020/21 is shown in **Appendix 1**.

**3.8 General Fund Balances**

The General Fund Balance as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 is £4.408m. A balanced budget was approved in February 2020 to include identified savings which have been built into individual budget allocations. This also included a planned return to balances for 2020/21 of £170k.

**4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 No Legal implications have been identified.

**5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**

**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

5.1 The Strategic purposes are included in the Council's corporate plan and guides the Council's approach to budget making ensuring we focus on the issues and what are most important for the borough and

our communities. Our Financial monitoring and strategies are integrated within all of our Strategic Purposes.

**Climate Change Implications**

- 5.2 The green thread runs through the Council plan. The Financial monitoring report has implications on climate change and these will be addressed and reviewed when relevant by climate change officers to ensure the correct procedures have been followed to ensure any impacts on climate change are fully understood.

**6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 No direct implications as a result of this report.

**Operational Implications**

- 6.2 Managers meet with finance officers monthly to consider the current financial position and to ensure actions are in place to mitigate any overspends.

**7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 The financial monitoring is included in the corporate risk register for the authority.

**8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Appendix 1 - Earmarked Reserves 2020/21

Appendix 2 - Savings Monitoring 2020/21

Appendix 3 – Capital programme – slippage request to 2021/22

**Cabinet**  
2021

31<sup>st</sup> March

**9. REPORT SIGN OFF**

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling Services	various
Lead Director / Head of Service	Chris Forrester, Head of Financial and Customer services	various
Financial Services	Chris Forrester, Head of Financial and Customer services	various
Legal Services	Claire Felton, Head of Legal and Property services	various
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	n/a	
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	n/a	

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# FINANCIAL RESERVES STATEMENT 2020/21

Appendix 1

Please note these figures have been rounded

Description	Balance b/fwd 1/4/2020	Budgeted Release /New reserves 2020/21	Revised Balance b/fwd 1/4/2020	Transfers in existing reserve 2020/21	Transfers out existing reserve 2020/21	New Reserve 2020/21	C/fwd 31/3/2020	Planned use for 2021/22 Budget	Comment
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Building Control	(7)	0	(7)	0	0	0	(7)	0	To Fund the mobile working project
Building Control Partnership	(69)	0	(69)	0	0	(18)	(87)	0	Partnership income has to be reinvested back in to the service.
Commercialism	(10)	0	(10)	0	10	0	0	0	To help fund costs in relation to commercialism projects
Community Services	(43)	0	(43)	0	21	0	(22)	0	To help towards a district network feasibility study and unauthorised trespass prevention.
Economic Growth Development	(1,342)	150	(1,192)	0	3	(155)	(1,344)	350	To fund the Economic Development opportunities across the District
Election Services	(96)	50	(46)	(5)	0	0	(51)	0	To support the delivery of individual electoral registration and to set aside a reserve for potential refunds to government
Financial Services	(479)	0	(479)	(25)	0	0	(504)	0	A number of reserves / grants have been set aside to support residents through the changes to welfare reform along with a reserve to support our Business continuity plans. This also includes funds to support the new enterprise system
Corporate Financing	(2,784)	(1,122)	(3,906)	0	0	0	(3,906)	100	The reserve has been created to offset the loss on Business rates collection and appeals in 2019/20.
Housing Schemes	(475)	0	(475)	0	145	0	(330)	142	To support the feasibility and implementation of housing schemes across the district
ICT/Systems	(87)	0	(87)	0	7	0	(80)	0	To provide replacement ICT and systems across the authority.
Leisure/Community Safety	(291)	0	(291)	0	121	0	(169)	0	Grant received and reserves set aside to support a number of leisure and well-being schemes across the District
Local Neighbourhood Partnerships	(16)	0	(16)	0	0	0	(16)	0	Grant received in relation to liveability schemes
Other	(115)	0	(115)	0	6	0	(109)	44	General reserves including - support for apprentices, set up costs and Brexit reserve.
Planning	(108)	0	(108)	0	0	(20)	(128)	0	Reserves in relation to a custom build grant to provide support to the council towards expenditure lawfully incurred in relation to the provision and maintenance of a self-build register, along with reserves to help towards future planning appeals.
Regulatory Services (Partner Share)	(35)	0	(35)	0	0	0	(35)	0	BDC Share of WRS grant related reserves
Shared Services Agenda	(311)	0	(311)	0	0	0	(311)	0	To fund potential redundancy and other shared costs
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>(6,268)</b>	<b>(922)</b>	<b>(7,190)</b>	<b>(30)</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>(193)</b>	<b>(7,100)</b>	<b>638</b>	

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SAVINGS & ADDITIONAL INCOME - BDC

APPENDIX 2

Department	Service	Strategic Purpose	Description of saving	2020-21 £'000	2020-21 Apr - Dec £'000	Quarter 3			
						On target Y/N	Additional (add to to in yr savings) £'000	below target Y/N	Pressure £'000
Community & Housing Services	Lifeline	Living independent, active & healthy lives	New Lifeline Digital Upgrade	-11	-8	Y			
Chief Executive	Printing & Reprographics	Enabling	Additional Savings from New Print Contract	-5	-4	Y	-4		
Chief Executive	Corporate Services	Enabling	Management Review	-54	-41	Y			
Chief Executive	Corporate Services	Enabling	Reduction in enabling costs - 1% per annum	-45	-34	Y			
Chief Executive	Corporate Services	Enabling	Saving on the estimated payment to the Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership	-150	-113	Y			
Finance and Customer Services	Customer Services	Work and financial independence	Full Service review	-30	-23	Y			
Environmental Services	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Income from Worcestershire County Council (WCC) for design services provided by Engineering & Design Team	-2	-2	N		Y	2
Environmental Services	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Inflation on WCC income for verge maintenance	-2	-2	Y			
Environmental Services	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Garden waste income	-25	-19	Y			
Environmental Services	Bereavement Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Additional income from new structure re commercialism	-11	-8	N		Y	8
Finance and Customer Services	Finance	Enabling	Insurance contract saving	-130	-98	Y			
Legal, Democratic & Leisure Services	Facilities Management	Run and grow a successful business	Historic Budgets no longer required.	-2	-2	Y			
Legal, Democratic & Leisure Services	Facilities Management	Run and grow a successful business	Historic Budgets no longer required.	-1	-1	Y			
Legal, Democratic & Leisure Services	Facilities Management	Run and grow a successful business	Additional income in relation to rents for land around the district	-4	-3	Y			
Legal, Democratic & Leisure Services	Business Development	Enabling	Extra income for rental of the Parkside rooms	-1	-1	N		Y	1
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Sports and Arts Development	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Reduction in Sports Development budgets	-5	-4	Y			
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Business Development	Run and grow a successful business	Reduction in NNDR budgets for Town centre Market stalls	-7	-5	Y			
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Parks and Events	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Reduction in Tree Works Budgets	-5	-4	Y			
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Development Control	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Savings on car mileage budgets	-4	-3	Y			
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Development Control	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Various general supplies and service budgets savings	-2	-2	Y			
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Strategic Planning	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Savings on employee Expenses budgets and other supplies and service budgets	-6	-5	Y			
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Strategic Planning	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Savings on consultant fee budgets	-1	-1	Y			
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Building Control	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Savings on photocopying & Print budgets	-2	-1	Y			
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Building Control	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Savings on ICT budgets	-1	-1	Y			
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Building Control	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	Savings on marketing budgets	-2	-1	Y			
BDC Reg Client	BDC Reg Client	Run and grow a successful business	Inflationary increase	-2	-2	Y			
BDC Reg Client	BDC Reg Client	Run and grow a successful business	Inflationary increase	-2	-2	N			2
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>-510</b>	<b>-382</b>		<b>-4</b>		<b>13</b>

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Description	Department	Strategic Purpose	Revised Full Year Budget 2020-21 £	Projected Outturn 2020-21 £	Projected Variance £	Request for Slippage to 2021/22 £	Comments
OLEV ULEV Taxi infrastructure scheme	Community & Housing GF Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	400,000	200,000	-200,000	200,000	The project was due to be completed in December but was delayed due to the 2nd lock down. It will now be completed during Quarter 4 and going in to the first quarter of 2021/22.
Bus Shelters	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	18,000	0	-18,000	18,000	Work to be completed May 21. Would like this moved to 2021/22. Unfortunately the volume of work expected by the engineering team has meant that this work has slipped, due to time needed to renew the bus shelter framework contract with procurement.
Cemetery Extension infrastructure at at North Bromsgrove Cemetery Phase Two	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	8,000	3,696	-4,304	4,000	New plinths installed but not needed to use the additional amount at this time. Possible pressure to come in final quarter of year due to increased death rate.
Fleet Replacement	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	1,536,253	1,120,069	-416,184	95,000	Request to move £95,000 into 2021/22 to cover the replacement of a tractor as the service area did not agree the specification in time and the procurment of a new washbay ramp has proved difficult as a suitable framework has not been found yet. All other vehicles will have been replaced by the end of March 21.
Replacement lighting at the Depot	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	23,000	3,642	-19,358	19,358	£3.6k spent on lighting for security cameras. Move £19k to 2021/22 Delayed while depot discussions take place.
Infrastructure Works Bdc Depot	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	252,000	0	-252,000	252,000	Move to 2021/22 Delayed while depot discussions take place
Replacement Parking machines	Environmental Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	120,000	12,000	-108,000	108,000	Figure now included in new car park 5 year capital scheme. New Road Lighting - £11,000 Virtual Permit scheme - £1000 CCTV - Contractor cant complete before April. Metric machines are on hold due to issues with the new finance system and compatability
Regeneration Fund	Financial & Customer Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	4,350,000	0	-4,350,000	4,350,000	Due to current conditions, projects hopefully resume in 2021-22
Re-landscaping of Recreation Ground	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	211,000	0	-211,000	211,000	Due to Covid and vacant post within Leisure there has been a delay in delivery of scheme. This scheme will be programmed to commence with in 2021/22 Q2 and 3
Bittell road recreation ground	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	62,000	44,000	-18,000	18,000	18k roll forward into 2021/22 for fitness equipment ongoing project to be completed Q1 2021
Rubery Redevelopment Works	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	32,738	0	-32,738	32,738	The project has various quotes in place for some work on the Rubery public toilet block, however due to other priorities this hasn't happened. We're also looking at various other projects, including additional green space, community signage and communications, which unfortunately haven't materialised this year due to the change in personnel and Covid-19
Fleet Management Computer System	Environmental Services	Enabling the Authority	16,600	0	-16,600	16,600	Move to 2021/22 - framework contract due to be completed early next financial year
Environmental Services Computer System	Environmental Services	Enabling the Authority	157,200	0	-157,200	157,200	Contract to be signed at the beginning of March. It is unlikely that payments will be made this financial year. Request funding is moved to 21/22
Funding for DFGs	Community & Housing GF Services	Living independent, active & healthy lives	1,103,101	600,000	-503,101	503,101	Spend based on information from Millbrook Agency
Home Repairs Assistance	Community & Housing GF Services	Living independent, active & healthy lives	91,221	30,000	-61,221	61,221	Spend based on information from Millbrook Agency
CCTV	Community & Housing GF Services	Living independent, active & healthy lives	167,376	100,000	-67,376	67,376	The project has been delayed due to covid and works will continue in Q4 and roll into 2021/22
Energy Efficiency Installation	Community & Housing GF Services	Living independent, active & healthy lives	95,988	30,000	-65,988	65,988	Low spend last year due to change of contract £12k allocated already this year, predicted further approx £30k spend this year (likely increased because of Covid19).
Sanders Park Play Area - Replacement for Tripod Swing (Health and Safety)	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	Living independent, active & healthy lives	35,000	0	-35,000	35,000	will take place Q1 2021
Energy Efficiency	Community & Housing GF Services	Work and financial independence	5,000	0	-5,000	5,000	
			<b>8,684,477</b>	<b>2,143,407</b>	<b>-6,541,070</b>	<b>6,219,582</b>	

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#### Community Grants Scheme

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor G Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Head of Service		Head of Finance and Customer Service
Report Author	Job Title: Democratic Services Officer Contact email: <a href="mailto:a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk">a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk</a> Contact Tel: 01527 881443	
Wards Affected		All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

#### 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet **RESOLVE** that:-

**Delegated authority be given to the Head of Finance and Customer Service following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources in respect of the detail of the Community Grants Scheme, which will be based on the principles of the New Homes Bonus Community Grants Scheme.**

#### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following receipt of a petition a number of years ago, the Council previously provided funding for community groups through its New Homes Bonus Community Grants Scheme. This was supported through the funding received from Central Government in respect of new properties built within the previous year.
- 2.2 Funding from Central Government for New Homes Bonus (NHB) has reduced for 2021/22 and there is no certainty around its provision in future years. Therefore, this year the Council was left with £12,000 to distribute within the community. Due to the exceptional circumstances the District has and continues to face due to the pandemic, it was agreed that an additional £68,000 from Covid grant funding should be combined with this figure to create a community grants budget for 2021/22.

- 2.3 it was further agreed that whilst this new Community Grants Scheme would follow the principles of the previous New Homes Bonus Community Grants Schemes, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups would be able to bid for up to £5,000 grant funding each for community projects under this scheme and there would not be a two tier scheme as in previous years nor would the need for housing growth need to be included. However, the support of the relevant Ward Councillor would be required.
- 2.4 Due to the time constraints and the need for the Scheme to be made available to those wishing to make an application as soon as possible, it is proposed that delegated authority be given to the Head of Finance and Customer Service in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling in respect of the Scheme's final detail.
- 2.5 Full details of the scheme together with a set of Frequently Asked Questions will be made available through the Council's website and promoted through Ward Councillors. It is anticipated that these will be available in mid April 2021, with applications being invited to commence from mid May 2021.
- 2.6 The timeline for the application process is attached as it is recognised that there is a need for the funds to be made available as soon as practicably possible.
- 2.7 It is further proposed that the final decision in respect of grant applications will be agreed by a Panel made up of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling, together with the Portfolio Holder for Community Services and a representative from all other political groups and the Panel meetings will be held online.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 £80,000 has been allocated within the Medium Term Financial Plan in respect of the Community Grants Scheme, as agreed at the Council meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Please consult with the Legal team about these.

### **5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Relevant Strategic Purpose**

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2021

31<sup>st</sup> March

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- 5.1 As has been the case in previous years, it is anticipated that the applications received will cover all the Council's strategic purposes.

**Climate Change Implications**

- 5.2 There are no direct climate change implications referring to this report.

**6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 Please consult the Policy team about equalities implications and refer to equality impact assessment, where undertaken, here.

**Operational Implications**

- 6.2 The allocation of funding will support the provision of projects within local communities and will not impact on the operational services provided by the Council.

**7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 The scheme has been included within the Medium Term Financial Plan for the year 2021/22 and therefore there will be no additional cost to the Council, any future scheme would be considered as part of the budget setting process in future years.

**8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Appendix 1 – Proposed Timeline for 2021/22.



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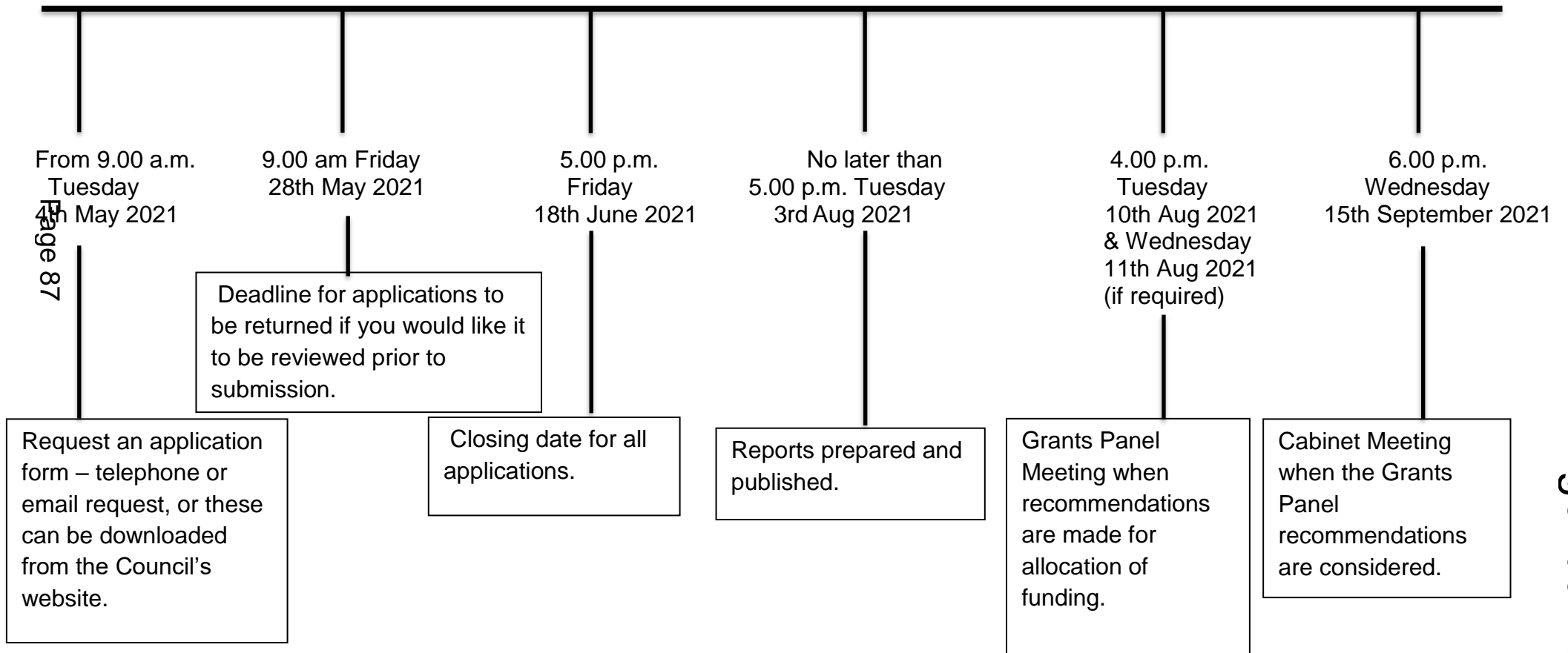
**9. REPORT SIGN OFF**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name and Job Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Portfolio Holder	Councillor G Denaro – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling	21/03/21
Lead Director / Head of Service	Chris Forrester – Head of Finance and Customer Service	21/03/21
Financial Services	See above.	
Legal Services	Clare Flanagan – Principal Solicitor	
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Becky Green – Policy Manager	21/03/21
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	Not applicable	

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## COMMUNITY GRANT TIMELINE 2021

This gives an outline of what we do with your grant application. Read through the guidance notes on our website and you will see what information you need to get together in order to apply. The timeline below shows how long the different processes take. It should be noted that these dates may be subject to change due to the current Covid-19 emergency.



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